Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

Raul Castro

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People's Power

Solzhenitsyn, Gulag and the Solzhenitsyn Industry

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Discussion

Maurice Costin
Ivor Mills
John Griffiths

Trends in Youth Culture

A Marxist View of Literature

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 18, Number 12

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Editorial Comments

BRITISH Capitalism is in desperate crisis. So from all sides—right-wing labour leaders, Tory and Liberal politicians, academic economists and leader writers—there resounds the old capitalist "solution"—"Restrain wage demands", "We must all tighten our belts", "We must all accept a reduced standard of living".

The "we" is by way of camouflage as workers well know. This advice involves, of course, the continuation of capitalist control over the economy and, consequently, economic decision-making by a tiny, unaccountable few whose sole aim is the preservation of the profit-making system.

A totally different approach is made by a group of Cambridge Marxist economists in a pamphlet just issued[1]. This places (in Chapter 1) the current crisis in its historical context of the "permanent crisis" of Britain's economy arising from the turn to Imperialism and the acquisition of colonies in the late nineteenth century. This resulted in the increasing export of capital at the expense of investment in home industry and the consequent relative technical backwardness of British industry compared with that of other capitalist countries.

It sees the solution of the crisis, not in wage restraint or reductions in living standards dressed up as a "social compact", but in taking over the economy, ending its parasitical, imperialist structure, planning and modernising it to serve progressive social policies.

A fundamental pre-requisite for achieving this is to break the stranglehold of Imperialism, World Capitalism, the multinationals as well as of the City, on Britain's economic life.

Ways in which a left Labour Government could do this are suggested in Chapter 2—"*Britain and the World Economy*". This has already appeared as a separate article by Bob Rowthorn in our journal[2]. They include running down the greater part of the City's international business activities, taking over some of the multi-nationals, getting out of the Common Market, ending foreign military expenditure. The requisition of Britain's foreign assets is also recommended to finance possible compensation and other Government activities.

Detailed estimates of the likely economic gains and losses are presented showing that, on balance, the proposals are viable.

The final two chapters are entitled "Problems of Planning" and "The Economic Potential of a Socialist Britain". The former discusses planning in a socialist Britain in the light of both the positive and negative experiences of planning in the socialist countries. It emphasises that planning to be successful must be based on the mobilisation and enthusiastic participation of the working people. The latter makes a realistic analysis of "where the money is to come from" to finance progressive social policies.

While not everything presented in this pamphlet will secure agreement, its general approach provides a good basis for struggle against the pretty clear intention of Wilson and the other right-wing leaders to try and solve the crisis at the expense of the people. It therefore deserves a wide circulation in the labour movement and the detailed discussion its authors ask for.

21st CONGRESS OF FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY

The 20th Congress of the French Communist Party was held in December 1972. According to Party rules the next Congress would have taken place in December 1975.

Why did the Party's Central Committee decide to hold a special (extraordinary) Congress this October?

Presenting his opening Report to the Congress, Georges Marchais explained:—

> "Because we, in France, find ourselves in a new political situation, characterised above all by the advance of the popular movement in favour of a profound political, economic and social change.
>
> "This situation poses two key problems that are closely linked.
>
> "The first is how successfully to bring about this change.
>
> "And the second, what must the role of our Party be in this struggle".

[1] *Britain's Economic Crisis* by the Cambridge Political Economy Group (Michael Elman, Bob Rowthorn, Ron Smith, Frank Wilkinson), *Spokesman Pamphlet* No. 44, 30p.

[2] See *Marxism Today*, August 1974.

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Comrade Marchais' Report was divided into five main sections:—

(1) The Conditions Exist for Democratic Change.
(2) The Application of our Correct Political Strategy.
(3) Profound Democratic Reforms.
(4) The Union of the People of France—What this Means for Us.
(5) For a More Influential, Stronger and more Active Communist Party.

We shall print in next January's issue of *Marxism Today* a large part of the second, third and fourth sections of this Report which deal with such questions as the road to socialism in France, the conception of the life of the people in a Socialist France, the relations of the fight for democracy and the fight for socialism, the conception of the democratic anti-monopoly revolution.

The sections that we shall publish also contain a study of how the French communists see the development of working class and popular unity and the extension of anti-monopoly unity to the great majority of the French people. Within these sections is a discussion of both the necessity of and the problems that have arisen within Left Unity (in particular with the Socialist Party), problems of trade union unity, of unity with progressive Christians, and with a section of former supporters of De Gaulle.

THE FACTORY BRANCH

The last section of George Marchais' Report dealt with problems of strengthening the Communist Party. 80,000 new recruits to the Party had already been made in 1974 by the time of the Congress (October). On September 20, 1974, there were 20,930 Party cells (branches), more than 1,410 more than at the 20th Congress in December 1972. It was estimated that by the end of the year the Party would have about 450,000 members.

In relation to the problems of strengthening the Party, George Marchais put much emphasis on the Factory Branches (cellules d'entreprise).

We need more branches everywhere, he said, but particularly in the factories and other enterprises:—

> "We usually say that the Party must be organised in the enterprises because it is there that the worker is subject directly to exploitation, there that the class struggle first develops. This is true, but the idea contained in it is far from sufficient. What is necessary is that the Party organisation in an enterprise carry out intense political and ideological activity amongst the mass of the workers in order to combat reactionary propaganda, and to make known communist policy.
>
> "Indeed, the factory (enterprise) has become not *only the key place of economic struggle but of the* political battle. This is due to the growing influence of the working class and of the mass of wage-earners, to the ever closer link between big capital and the state and, equally, between economic and political questions, but also to the fact that political demands do not today halt at the factory gates. . . .
>
> "In these conditions the presence, the activity of the Communist Branch in the enterprise is more necessary than ever. Whether it is to explain the complex conditions of exploitation, to contribute to defining economic and political demands, to organise action for aims that go beyond the context of the enterprise, to win the workers to struggle for the objectives of the Common Programme, to spread the ideas of socialism . . . the Branch has tasks that no-one, absolutely no-one, can carry out in its place.
>
> This is why we must attach the greatest importance to the functioning of the Factory (enterprise) Branches. This is why the Central Committee emphasised that the Branch Secretary must be the best militant, the most capable of leading the struggle in the enterprise' ".

BIG BUSINESS GETS BIGGER

The power—and the menace—of the big firms and the multi-national enterprises is being increasingly recognised. But not much detailed information has been available about the actual extent and scope of their operations. This has been due, amongst other reasons, to the fact that the 1968 Census of Production has only recently been published.

The Labour Research Department did a good job in exposing the ramifications and the activities of the multi-national firms.[3] Now Sam Aaronovitch (author of *Monopoly* and *The Ruling Class* and Senior Lecturer in economics at the Polytechnic of the South Bank) in collaboration with Malcolm C. Sawyer (Lecturer in economics, University College London) has undertaken a detailed study of the increasingly dominant place of the biggest firms in British industry and commerce.

Their findings were outlined briefly in an article in the *Guardian* (August 2) and, in greater detail in an article in *Lloyds Bank Review* (October 1). A full study is to appear in book form entitled *Big Business* early next year to be published by MacMillan.

They base their findings mainly on a study of the position of the five largest firms in different industries, and they write:—[4]

[3] *The Menace of the Multinationals*, Labour Research Department, 20p.

[4] *The Guardian*, 2/8/74.

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> If we look at the 324 industries for which figures are available and examine the extent to which the five largest firms dominate the sales of those industries, we find the following:—At one end there are only eight industries in which the five largest firms account for less than one-fifth of the sales, but there are 155 industries, (accounting for nearly one-half of all industry sales) where the five largest concentrate more than 70 per cent of those industries' sales in their hands. The average level of sales concentration in the hands of the five largest firms was nearly 69 per cent in 1968. . . .
>
> If concentration increased from 1968 to 1974 as it had done between 1958 and 1968, then the average level of five firm concentration would be 78 per cent in 1974".

Another writer on the same subject calculates that by 1993 more than two-thirds of products will be controlled by the five biggest firms in the industries concerned in ratios of between 80 per cent and 100 per cent.

These valuable facts and figures will assist all progressives in the Labour movement in their fight to secure the implementation of recent Labour Party and TUC Conference decisions on nationalisation by the new Labour Government. They will likewise drive home the need to bring the big firms and the multinationals under public control if the Labour Government is to exercise any real control over the economy.

DANGER WARNINGS FROM WEST GERMAN ELECTIONS

The results of the Provincial elections in Bavaria and Hesse, held in the last days of October, are a serious warning of the dangers which arise from the continued pursuit of anti-working class policies by right-wing Labour leaders at local and national level.

In both cases the Social-Democratic Party suffered serious losses, especially in the urban areas and the big cities. The ultra-right-wing Christian-Social Union (the Bavarian variant of the Christian-Democratic Party) led by the notorious reactionary—Franz Josef Strauss—achieved the highest vote in the whole of its post-war history.

The final figures are (1970 figures in brackets), as follows:—

Bavaria			
CSU	62.1%	of the vote	(56.4%)
SPD	30.2%	do.	(33.3%)
FDP (Coalition partners of the SPD)	5.3%	do.	(5.5%)
Hesse			
CDU	47.3%	do.	(39.7%)
SPD	43.2%	do.	(45.9%)
FDP	7.4%	do.	(10.1%)

The Hesse District Committee of the German Communist Party (DKP) in its statement on the elections, declares that the results represent a dangerous swing to the Right. The CDU, by resorting to unexampled national and social demagogy and the most intense anti-communist slander, succeeded in giving the impression that it could halt the development of the capitalist crisis.

The Committee puts the blame squarely on the right-wing social-Democratic leaders. "They did not attack Big Business and the CDU sufficiently. They abandoned urgently needed reforms and opposed wage and salary increases. Instead of attacking the profits and power of Big Business, they put the burden of the crisis on to the working people."

The Bavarian District Committee makes the same points. "The SPD not only does nothing in the face of the price increases and unemployment brought about by the big concerns, it itself increases state controlled prices. Like the CDU, the right-wing Social Democratic leaders call on the workers to tighten their belts and forego promised reforms. . . . The right-wing leaders joined in the smear campaign waged by Strauss against Social Democrats and trade unionists who defend the rights of the workers. . . . No one need be surprised at the loss of votes amongst workers by the SPD since leading right-wing SPD politicians in Bavaria repeatedly called on workers to vote for CDU candidates rather than for SPD candidates they branded as left-wing".

The German Communist Party improved its voting position although the undemocratic rule preventing any party securing less than 5 per cent of the vote from getting seats. In Bavaria, as a whole, the party increased its vote by 5,664 compared with the 1970 elections. It also won several hundred new recruits, especially young people.

The Party made some impressive gains in the municipal elections in Hesse which took place on the same day as the Provincial elections. In Marburg the party vote increased from 5.3 per cent to 9.2 per cent, thus increasing the number of Communist councillors from two to five. In Moerfelden the vote increased from 5.2 per cent to 6.5 per cent. In Reinheim the Party got 6.1 per cent, in Neuberg 6.1 per cent and more than 5 per cent in many other places.

These results are all attributed to the example of selfless work by the existing communist councillors.

But the main result—the swing to the right—needs to be noted here. Right-wing

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policies by Labour can only benefit the Tories.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

Seven years ago, PEP carried through a most intensive study of racial discrimination in every aspect of life in this country. Now in *Racial Disadvantages in Employment* by David J. Smith[5] they have presented a picture of discrimination against black and brown workers on the job. It shows that, despite the 1968 Race Relations Act, which was supposed to prevent such discrimination, this has developed into a settled pattern which only decisive action by the trade unions can destroy. At present, no one is trying to tackle it. Statistics and general expressions of concern are there in plenty but positive action to change the situation is almost totally lacking from any quarter.

Among managers there is a general lack of awareness or understanding of the law and, if they are aware of it, they sometimes take a roundabout method to evade it, such as preventing promotion of black people by recruiting all supervisors (always white) from outside the plant.

Interviews took place at the head offices of 27 of the 40 largest employers in Britain. 14 had not considered race relations. Of the remainder, only one had formulated a definite policy of non-discrimination and made it known to those responsible for recruitment and promotion and arranged for a check-up. Six others had taken some initiative but had not taken any steps to see that the instructions were carried out. The others had had some discussion but no effective action had resulted.

Proportionately nearly double the number of black and brown male workers are doing non-skilled manual jobs as are white workers.

Only 14 per cent are doing non-manual work compared with 42 per cent of the total work force. Even for non-skilled work an Asian or West Indian has to make many more applications before he gets a job than a white worker. Far more shift work (unsocial hours) is done by black and brown workers and firms employing these workers are far more likely to operate a night shift. A substantial number of plants with high concentration of black and brown workers have no non-white supervisors.

Nearly 20 years ago, in 1955, the TUC passed a resolution condemning racial discrimination and called for action to prevent it. The PEP report mentioned four lines of action which were needed to see that this resolution was carried out but shows that these actions have not been taken. It appears that proportionately as many black and brown workers are members of trade unions as white workers but little action has been taken to cater for members of minority groups. It was only in 1972 that the Transport and General Workers Union took on the first black full time official in the country.

The report suggests that the unions should appoint Asian and West Indian officers with specific responsibility for assisting minorities and seeing that action is taken against discrimination. The trouble at present is that no action is taken by the TUC and trade unions at the centre even when discrimination is reported to them.

Although the report does not mention them, there are some signs of a more positive attitude. Some of these new developments are given in the pamphlet by Tony Gilbert *Danger—Racialists at Work* (12p from Liberation, 313-315 Caledonian Road, N.1). The fact that Jack Jones, who is chairman of the International Committee of the TUC (which is responsible for race relations) wrote the foreword and that the Transport and General Workers Union has taken 1,000 copies and other unions have given bulk orders, is a sign that trade unionists are beginning to see that racialism not only harms those against whom it is directed but confuses, divides and corrupts those who accept its ideas.

THE NEWSPAPER GAME

Any publicity is good publicity, the media men like to say. Press, radio, television and advertising do indeed appear often to have thrived on the vials of denunciation poured over them down the years rather than to have suffered real damage.

The latest coals heaped on their heads come in Paul Hoch's *The Newspaper Game*[6] an inquiry into the behind-the-scenes organisation, financing and brainwashing techniques of the news media.

Burning coals they are, too. Dozens of press episodes—the Munich scandals, the Profumo case, the "selling" of the Vietnam war, Cuba, the continual baiting of students and young people and much else—are dissected with excoriating skill.

[5] PEP, £2.20.

[6] Calder and Boyer, £3.95.

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How on earth, one wonders, have the salaried communicators managed to stay in business at all under the rain of exposures, which has been pretty continuous since Hearst's yellow press, appearing at the onset of the era of imperialism, came under the Liberals' lash?

The book from the former leftist lecturer of the LSE and now professor of humanities in Canada may supply part of the answer.

For it shows him, in one sense, to be as much mesmerised by the media as are its own star performers and defenders. Generations of critics taking a Liberal or moralistic or sociologically neutral viewpoint have also been in this pickle. For Hoch the media and capitalism are one. "The economic organisation of the press and of society generally has turned notions like Freedom of the Press, and indeed Freedom generally, into a facade behind which to hide what amounts to a class dictatorship".

So nothing much is to be done—short, of course, of the revolution.

After a side-sneer at the "professional reformers" of the press like the *Tribune* group (no mention of the old *Daily Herald*, the *Daily Worker* or the *Morning Star*, the real champions of real press freedom for half a century) he propounds just two "healthy steps" to be taken.

They are that journalists and printworkers should "assert control" over the papers they write in and produce, and the further development of the "underground press" into a "devastating, totalistic cultural-politico-economic critique of monopoly capitalist society".

Equally dismissive is his attitude to press freedom as a historically formed democratic value. It all originated, he avers, "as a part of the apparatus by which the developing industrial bourgeoisie of the eighteenth and nineteenth century wrested control of society from the landed aristocracy" (Shades of Cobbett, Carlile and Hetherington, forgive the man!)

Such half-baked half-truths mask three things: the real history of the democratic struggle for free newspapers, especially in Britain; the real opposition to the baronial press maintained by the labour, trade union and working-class movement; and the drive for a democratisation of all the media which has built up round this movement's papers since the mid-sixties.

Working people, too, figure in this study simply as a kind of degenerated "mass man", helpless victims of the "consumerism" of which the media are just one form, obligatorily passive until "the day". "In the last analysis it will be socialism or fascism," says Hoch.

This approach vitiates his book, giving a depressive impact even to his good job of destructive analysis, and furnishing one more example of the ultra left's barrenness of foresight and purpose.

WOMEN IN HISTORY

The publication of a paperback edition of Sheila Rowbotham's book, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (Pelican 60p) is to be widely welcomed. The book attempts to uncover the role which women have played in history and which has been obscured by historians up till now. Here we find narrated and discussed the contributions women made, both individually and collectively, to the Puritan revolution, the early English and American labour movements, the revolutions in Russia and China and much more besides. Especially stimulating is the section on Mary Wollstonecraft and other early English and French feminist thinkers where some of the initial threads of feminist thinking are drawn out.

So broad is Sheila Rowbotham's canvas that the attempt to trace common themes and ideas within the women's movement sits uneasily with her narrative. But maybe that in itself is a reflection of the suspicion with which feminist movements and socialist movements have viewed each other—one of the major themes to emerge from the book. Indeed, as the author says in her introduction, the book will only be useful "if it is repeatedly dismantled and reconstructed as part of a continuing effort to connect feminism to socialist revolution." By reasserting the place of women in history Sheila Rowbotham has begun one part of that process. This book should encourage others, both in writing and in action, to take up the ideas and themes with which she deals.

MARXISM TODAY — JANUARY 1975
will include
ALVARO CUNHAL
Report to Extraordinary Communist Party Congress (in full)
GEORGES MARCHAIS
Extracts from Report to French Communist Party Congress

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People's Power

Raul Castro

(Preparatory work was started in 1973 for the holding of elections of representative institutions in Matanzas Province on an experimental basis. These elections were held on July 11th, 1974. It is planned to extend them to the rest of the country in 1976 after the first Party Congress is held.

We print below extracts from a speech made by Lt.-Gen. Raul Castro, Second Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba and First Deputy Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government of Cuba, closing a three-week seminar of delegates elected to people's power in Matanzas Province. The speech was made on August 22nd, 1974. 1,046 of the 1,079 delegates elected took part in the seminar.

The text is from the translation published in the English edition of Gramma, *organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, September 8th, 1974. The subheads are ours).*

In the Early Years of our Revolution

. . . You were given a detailed explanation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the role of each of its component parts: the party, the state and the mass and social organisations; the nature of the state was explained to you, the structure of the proletarian state and its component parts; you studied which of those parts have been present during the past 15 years of the revolution and those which have not and examined the role that the representative institutions of the state are to play.

In the early years of our revolution the necessary conditions for the setting up of these institutions did not exist, nor was there an urgent nor pressing need for them, they were not decisive in carrying out the tasks which faced the revolution during the early period.

Those first years were marked by a period of rapid change, of deep-rooted revolutionary change.

In those initial years it was necessary to confront continual and increasingly violent imperialist aggression and internal counter-revolutionary activity.

In order to operate in such a situation and face the tasks of the moment, we needed a state apparatus which was both functional and could be quickly mobilised and which would operate as a dictatorship on behalf of the working people; a state apparatus in which the legislative, executive and administrative powers were concentrated in one body which was able to make quick decisions.

Our Revolutionary Government in which all legislative, executive and administrative powers were concentrated during the early years, fulfilled those tasks set before it in the initial stage of struggle for survival; it enacted the revolutionary laws, expropriated the imperialists, eliminated the national exploiters and successfully carried through the political struggle against both internal and external aggression.

At the same time during those initial years the lack of material resources led to fears about the feasibility of setting up the organs of people's power when they would not have the necessary resources to cope with certain tasks including some for which there was great need in the population, like housing, maintenance and repair.

Not Yet Ready

It was feared that limited resources would prevent the organs of people's power from fulfilling the tasks assigned to them and that the idea of their establishment, which was basically correct, might well be discredited.

In the first years of the revolution we were not equipped to face the task of setting up representative institutions.

At that time, we did not have a strong party; the mass organisations were not sufficiently developed. In short we did not have the organisational tools available to us now.

When, at the end of the 1960s, we could possibly have said that the conditions for setting up those representative institutions already existed, we were caught up in the great economic struggle for the giant sugar harvest of 1970. And, as you know, and as Comrade Fidel has pointed out on a number of occasions, the concentration of forces in this field led us to neglect other branches of the economy and other work-fronts of the revolution.

To all these factors, we should add a certain lack of experience and understanding on the part of many of us regarding the importance of these representative institutions and the role which they are to play.

But despite the fact that such representative institutions of the state did not exist over all those years, we can safely say that the Revolutionary Government has, on the whole, fulfilled the task with which it was entrusted.

The state was nonetheless a provisional state, and it is now necessary for it to assume a definitive form, as Comrade Fidel has stressed.

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The Conditions Ripen

The institutionalisation of our revolution began in 1970 and was accelerated from 1972 onwards, when the conditions ripened and there was an economic recovery and considerable progress made in giving new life to and strengthening the mass organisations.

In late 1972, the Council of Ministers was restructured and the Executive Committee set up. During 1973, the whole party apparatus, from the Central Committee down to the municipal committees, was restructured, the mechanisms by which they were to function were clearly outlined, their role and responsibilities made clear and the process of reorganising the judicial system got under way. In 1973, preparatory work was undertaken for organising the representative institutions in Matanzas Province in 1974 on an experimental basis. It is planned to extend these institutions to the rest of the country in 1976, after the First Party Congress.

The setting up of representative institutions of the state constitutes a tremendous step forward in the revolutionary process. With this our proletarian state is complete; and, if at the beginning, during the early years of struggle for survival, they were neither necessary nor vital parts of the state and, indeed, they might well have put a brake on the state which then needed to be quickly mobilised, with the conditions created, they have become an absolute necessity, a fundamental part of the state, through which the participation of the people will become real, will take on a regular, systematic and institutionalised form.

The People—Decisive Factor

This does not mean that the revolution and its leaders have at any time placed themselves above the people, that the people were forgotten, that we at any point failed to take into account the masses: on the contrary, it was being able to count on the working masses and other sectors of the people which made possible the success of the insurrectionary struggle, the overthrow of the dictatorship, the holding of the General Strike and the blocking of the plans for a coup. Only because we had the support of the people, enthusiastic participation of the masses, was it possible to carry out the profound revolutionary change to confront imperialist aggression, the bands of counter-revolutionaries in the Escambray, Matanzas and other regions, the invasion at Playa Giron, the situation created by the October Crisis, and the difficulties resulting from the blockade. It has been the people, the masses of our workers who have been mobilised time and time again, increasingly better organised in the different mass organisations, who have been the decisive factor throughout the development of the revolution.

There is probably no other case in history in which a revolution, the leadership of a revolution, has had such support from the people, such unlimited and unshakeable confidence and revolutionary enthusiasm on the part of the masses, such complete unity as that which our people have given their revolution, its leaders, and especially the beloved and undisputed leader of that revolution, Comrade Fidel Castro.

It is not a question of our revolutionary state not having been democratic, even when the representative institutions did not exist.

A State of the Majority

When a state like ours represents the interests of the workers, regardless of its form and structure, it is a much more democratic state than any other kind which has ever existed in history, because the state of the workers, the state which has undertaken the construction of socialism is, in any form, a state of the majority, while all other previous states have been states of exploiting minorities.

The bourgeois-landlord state which existed in Cuba even in the period before the coup on March 10, 1952, with its "representative" institutions, the House and the Senate with its regular elections, was infinitely less democratic than our revolutionary state, because it contributed to the domination of our country by the imperialists, monopolies and other foreign companies. And it represented their national allies, both Cuban and foreign members of the bourgeoisie and the large landowners. It was an organ of coercion, with its army, police, torturers, gangsters, jails and courts directed against the interests of the great majority of the people.

The revolutionary state regained control of all our resources which were in the hands of the imperialists and other exploiters and restored them to the people.

The means of production which were the private property of a few became the property of all.

Unemployment was eliminated and new work became available for all; illiteracy was eradicated and free education introduced for all; medical care and hospital services were also made free for all; and everyone had the assurance of being cared for in their old age.

The people were organised and given arms and taught how to handle those weapons so that they could defend themselves. The masses have participated in the discussion of all the most important aspects of the revolution, the main laws, and now they have started to participate in the discussion of economic plans at the level of base units of production and services.

Representative Institutions Now Necessary

Our state has been, and is, an essentially democratic state, a state of the humble for the humble and by the humble; a state of and for all the workers. What the creation of representative institutions

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means, then, is the perfecting of our state, of giving it a complete and definitive structure, of perfecting our democracy.

If socialist representative institutions are an expression of the people's will through the vote, if they represent a means by which the people are not only represented by the state but are, in fact, a part of that state, participating in its decisions in a direct and systematic way, and if the conditions for their creation already exist, then it is essential and imperative that they be set up.

Already in present-day conditions, to paraphrase Lenin, we could say that "without representative institutions one cannot conceive of our democracy, not even when what is in question is a proletarian democracy".

And here lies the enormous historic importance of the step which is being taken and the extraordinary responsibility and great privilege which you, as members of the first socialist institutions to be organised in our country, bear; that of having the opportunity to show through your work the role of these institutions, that of being the protagonists in defining the form that our proletarian state will take in the future.

The representative organs of people's power came into being after 15 years of the development of the revolution, during which time we have learned from the experience of our successes and failures.

We must make every effort to ensure that these institutions are free from bad habits and practices acquired over the years in which these institutions did not exist and when there was an excess of centralisation in many areas, when we had inadequate administrative procedures, when there was little understanding of and much confusion about the role and functions of the party, the state agencies and the mass organisations.

This is something that all of us, we and you, must consider, and especially those comrades, delegates or members of the executive committees of people's power or functionaries of the new administrative departments who come from the old administrative apparatus, who worked for years under the old system and therefore run the risk or at least the possibility of being more heavily imbued with such bad habits or practices.

Replace Administrative Procedures with Democratic Procedures

It is necessary to be aware of the fact that these organs of people's power are, as Fidel said on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Federation of Cuban Women, to "substitute the purely administrative practice of the first few years of the revolution, replacing administrative procedures which run the risk of becoming bureaucratic procedures, with democratic procedures".

The existence and functioning of the organs of people's power, the representative institutions of our socialist state, the highest organs of state power in the land under our jurisdiction, must stamp out such purely administrative practices and replace all procedures which run the risk of becoming bureaucratic, and which, in many cases, in all too many cases, have unfortunately already become bureaucratic procedures.

The organs of people's power are responsible, at a municipal, regional and provincial level, for the administration of a number of important affairs which up to now were administered from the centre. But the great importance of these organs does not rest in their administrative responsibilities, but in the fact that they are the basic organs of state power and comprise delegates democratically elected by the masses, that they are organs through which the people have the possibility of participating directly in the control and administration of social affairs. The existence of the organs of people's power should necessarily imply the eradication of bureaucratic centralism which still prevails in many sectors of our state apparatus, and put in its place democratic centralism, the fundamental tenet on which the state should function.

Democratic Centralism

You have just studied the basic principles of democratic centralism, but this is one of the points we should like to elaborate on because it is of cardinal importance in the functioning and very success of people's power.

Democratic centralism, as applied by the state organs means, in the first place, that the members of these, the highest organs of state power, the representative institutions, are elected from the bottom by the masses; it means that those elected as delegates and members of the executive committees at the different levels must periodically account for their activities, in a regular and systematic way, before those who elected them; and this is one of the most important principles to be taken into consideration in the concrete work of the organs of people's power, and one which must necessarily be transformed from a mere declaration of intent into something which is practical and systematically carried out. At each level of people's power, the maximum authority does not lie in the hands of those elected, but with those who elect, not individually, but collectively. In this lies the essence of people's power, that which makes the participation of the masses in state power something real and makes possible the actual carrying out of that power by the delegates.

And in the electoral circumscription maximum authority does not rest with the elected delegate, but with the electorate as a whole. They are the ones who give the mandate to the delegates to represent them

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in putting forward their problems, complaints and opinions; they are the ones who can revoke that mandate whenever they feel that the elected delegates do not represent their interests. Therefore, it is the delegate who must be accountable for his activities to his electors and not vice-versa. It is the mass of the people who have the highest powers; the power of the delegate is derived from and given to him by the masses.

On the municipal level, maximum authority does not rest with the elected executive committee, but with the municipal assembly that elected it: it is the assembly of delegates that grants the mandate for the executive committee to act on its behalf and carry out the agreements and decisions made in the periods between meetings, and it is the assembly that has the power to modify in toto or in part the membership of the executive committee whenever it deems this necessary. It is therefore the municipal executive committee that is accountable to the municipal assembly, and not the reverse.

Likewise, the president, vice-president and secretary of the municipal executive committee are elected by this body and ratified by the assembly, and, consequently they are accountable to the executive committee and to the assembly and they must act in accordance with the agreements and decisions of these two bodies of municipal people's power.

The Masses Wield the Greatest Power

And so the president, vice-president and secretary of the municipal executive committee are subordinate to the aforementioned executive committee and the municipal assembly: the whole executive committee is subordinate to this assembly and, in turn, the assembly is composed of delegates elected by and subordinate to the mass of electors of their respective circumscriptions, the result being that it is the masses who, in practice, wield the greatest power, and who are, therefore, the real active protagonists of the process with concrete and institutionalised power through which they can exercise their initiative and their decisions.

If the power structure were the reverse, and the executive committee were subordinate to the president of municipal people's power, and in turn, the assembly were subordinate to the executive committee and its president, and if the masses of electors in each circumscription were answerable to their delegate, then real and primary state power would rest not with the masses, but with the president and the executive committee of municipal people's power; and each lower rung of the ladder would have less power to take initiative and make decisions, and by the time we reach the base of the ladder, which is the masses, they would have no authority, would be passive protagonists in the process and mere executors of decisions taken by the higher-ups.

And what we have just explained as regards municipal power, takes on even greater importance the more we climb the ladder to higher levels of administration; and even more so as regards the mechanism that has been adopted and according to which the full-time members of the executive committee of people's power at the regional and provincial level are not in their entirety delegates elected directly by the masses in the circumscriptions, but elected by the delegates of the masses which comprise the regional and provincial assemblies.

For this reason it is necessary to have a practical, clear understanding of people's power at all levels, and to maximise at all levels the exercising of power by the assemblies, the supreme organ of state power at each respective level.

The regional executive committee is elected by the regional assembly to act on its behalf, to carry out the agreements and decisions taken by its committee and to assume the responsibilities of state leadership in the region in the lapse of time between meetings of the assembly. As a result, the regional executive committee is subordinate to the regional assembly and is accountable to it. The same is true at the provincial level.

In the same way and, as we have just explained, at the municipal level, given that the president, vice-president and secretary of the provincial and regional executive committees are subordinate to the respective executive committees, they are also subordinate to the corresponding regional and provincial assemblies and the delegates that compose them are subordinate to the municipal assemblies that elected them, and to the circumscriptions by which they were elected delegates. Once again we see that maximum state power in practice always lies in the hands of the masses. The primary power from which all other power is derived, rests with the masses. Moreover the masses are ever present in the form of their delegates directly elected by the masses.

If the hierarchy of decisions and power were inverted in the form that was previously indicated, as we saw, the masses would have no power and decision-making would, as we ascended the ladder once again, be increasingly out of touch with the masses.

Putting the Principle of Democratic Centralism into Practice

If we really want the masses to participate in state decisions—and that is clearly what all of us want—because this is in keeping with the essence of socialist democracy and the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and because to make direct use of all the knowledge and experience accumulated by the masses and their creative initiative makes the work of the leadership apparatus at the same time lighter

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and much more efficient—if we want the masses to play a real and direct part in the governing of society, we must see to it that the principle of democratic centralism functions in every sense of the word.

Every delegate to the organs of people's power should meet with the masses in his circumscription once every three months to account for his activity. (With meetings of this sort every three months, the first should be held early December and, throughout the whole experiment, in all there should be four such meetings.) In between such meetings in which the delegates are answerable to all the population living in the circumscription, the delegates should try to hold at least one separate meeting with the people of the area of each Committee for the Defence of the Revolution or farm grouping which are part of the circumscriptions. These smaller meetings will enable closer and more direct contact between the delegate and the masses, and will facilitate a more lively dialogue and greater participation of the electorate.

Moreover, each delegate should also set aside a certain period of time each week to meet with the electors of his circumscription on an individual basis to listen to their problems, complaints and suggestions.

Nothing Must be Left Unexplained

In every collective contact with his electors the delegate should report on the activities and different responsibilities of municipal people's power, on his personal activity as a delegate, the way in which the problems which the electors asked him to put before the organs of people's power have been handled, those which can and those which cannot be solved, or those which can only be solved over a longer period of time and on the reasons for each solution found and each measure taken. Nothing must be left unexplained before the masses.

The delegates must be well informed of the reasons behind the different measures adopted by state agencies, whether they be the organs of people's power on the municipal, regional or provincial level or the central state agencies. If the price of something goes up, it must be explained; if the amount of something which is distributed is changed, an explanation must be given to the masses; if a product is delayed more than normal in reaching the people, the causes must be given; if the hours in which a service is given are altered, the people must know the reasons why and, in each case, a convincing explanation must be given. The delegates should never present the masses with absurd explanations or formal reasons to sidestep the issue and reasons that convince nobody. At the assemblies to which they belong and in the corresponding executive committees the delegates must demand all the necessary information to give satisfactory explanations to the masses.

In turn, the delegates must gather together all the complaints and suggestions of their electors and present them in the respective assemblies. A complaint, suggestion or opinion which is put forward and supported by the majority of the electors should be transmitted by the delegate to the organs of people's power, even if he himself is not in agreement. The delegate does not represent himself but the mass of electors who have elected him and his duty is to act in the interests of the opinions expressed and the problems of the masses and not his personal opinions and problems.

We must bear in mind, as Fidel said in his July 26th speech this year, that "each and every citizen who requests something from you must be given an honest and sincere explanation of the possibilities of having his request fulfilled. We must never deceive anyone".

Subordination of Lower to Higher Organs

Delegates to the organs of people's power are accountable not only to their constituency, but also to higher levels of people's power and of the central state organs, since another basic principle of democratic centralism is that of subordination of the lower to the higher organs. The delegates are accountable to the electors of their circumscription, but also to their municipal assembly and the executive committee. The municipal organs of people's power are accountable to the regional organs, the regional to the provincial and the provincial to the central state organs. . . .

The subordination of the lower to the higher organs is determined by the need for adequate uniformity, homogeneity, co-ordination and correlation of activities carried out by the state apparatus, regardless of in which municipality, region or province they take place; and by the necessity to harmonize the particular interests of each municipality with the broader interests of the region, province and nation.

The regional organs of people's power respond to and watch over the interests of all the municipalities of a given region, and in order to avoid that a given municipality adopts decisions or undertakes activities in detriment of the interests of another municipality, the people's power organs at the municipal level are subordinate to those of the region.

Likewise, the provincial organs or people's power answer for and watch over the interests of all the municipalities and regions of a given province and to guarantee that the interests of one municipality or region do not conflict with another. The people's power organs at the municipal and regional level are subordinate to those at the provincial level and, for the same reasons, these three levels are subordinate to the central state organs.

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In this regard, the higher organs have the power to nullify an agreement or decision of the assemblies and executive committees at the lower levels, when these are in contradiction with laws and regulations in force or affect the broader interests of other communities throughout the country. The agreements adopted by the executive committee of people's power at a given level can be overruled by the people's power assembly at this same level to which it is subordinate. It can also be overruled by the executive committee or the assembly of the higher organs of people's power. Before using the power of annulment, which should be used only under exceptional circumstances, as a last resort, all possible means of reasoning on the part of the higher organs to convince the lower ones that have taken the decision in question must have been exhausted.

We must bear in mind that, together with the subordination of lower to higher organs, which guarantees the necessary centralization of methodology and setting norms, of the planning of resources and all other aspects requiring some degree of centralization, we must ensure and also guarantee the essential autonomy of each level of people's power in being able to take decisions freely and under their own responsibility in all questions pertaining to their jurisdiction.

Decentralization

The people's power organization must not simply mean decentralization down to the provincial level, that is to say, decentralization which solely transfers the power and administrative mechanisms concentrated until now in the central apparatus to the provincial organs of people's power. The establishment of people's power means decentralization at all levels of the state apparatus; concentration of the absolute majority of the economic and social activities at the lower levels of the state apparatus, that is, the municipalities; decentralization not only of the province with regard to the nation, but of the region with regard to the province, and the municipality with regard to the region; and the future decentralization of the economic units with regard to the state administrative centres.

The lower divisions of people's power are subordinate to the higher ones, but function autonomously within the legal and normative framework established, and must not be subjected to the constant and limiting supervision of the higher bodies. This mechanism, besides implementing a more efficient, functional process for adopting decisions in accordance with the demands of time and place, also frees the higher organs, and especially the state agencies, from the heavy load of day-to-day administrative tasks, which cannot be correctly carried out in practice and have to be overlooked to a great extent, and which at the same time, sidetrack these organs from developing their responsibilities and carrying through their tasks in the setting of norms, control and checking of activities under their jurisdiction. . . .

The Right to Criticize

Another principle of democratic centralism, upon which the fulfilment of the principles of collective leadership and the system of accountability depend is the regular and systematic holding of meetings with electors in each circumscription and meetings of the assemblies and executive committees at the different levels.

The final principle of democratic centralism which we wanted to mention is freedom of discussion, criticism and self-criticism in the organs of people's power. All members of the different organs of people's power must exercise the right to express their opinions, sincerely and frankly, on all the matters put to them before a final decision is made; and at the meetings of the organs to which they belong, they must exercise the right to criticize any measure, member or functionary of the organs of people's power regardless of his position.

Publicity in the mass media about the well-founded and confirmed criticism of measures adopted by one or other of the organs of people's power should be viewed as both sound and positive, although this should not necessarily lead to the replacement of the person who is criticized. The people should have detailed information on the work of the organs of people's power, their members and their strong and weak points. As their name indicates, they are organs of the power of the people, they are institutions of the people, and for that reason the people have the right to be informed about all aspects of their activity and operations. This is also the reason why in one of the study materials, we read, "The meetings of the assemblies will be public unless the executive committee or the assembly itself determines in exceptional cases, that a certain meeting or part of a meeting should be private".

The organs of people's power are made up of delegates elected by the people, representatives of the interests and opinions of the people; in their meetings, the people's problems are discussed and they should be discussed in the presence of the people, unless state secrets or national security are involved.

Relations of Party and State

You have also just finished studying the relations that should exist between the party, the mass organization and the state agencies, and specifically the organs of people's power. However, we should like to dwell on a few aspects of this question; in doing so, it would be useful to recall what is put

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forward in the Communiqué of the Central Committee of the party on relations between the Central Committee apparatus and the central state agencies. The Communiqué states, textually, "Over the years in which we worked without an adequate party or state structure and without a clear definition of the inter-relations and limitations of each, the party and state institutions have, to a certain extent, gone beyond their own limits. They have on a number of occasions and on different matters mutually trespassed on each other's field of responsibility and have mutually substituted each other in carrying out the powers and duties assigned to them."

The logical result was that leaders and functionaries of the two fell into practices which grew stronger and stronger and which today, owing to inertia, tend to remain and create additional difficulties in carrying out the necessary and indispensable task of perfecting the party apparatus, state institutions and the mass organizations, so that they will all function better, and will thereby lead to a more rapid advance in the historic task of building socialism, the first phase of the communist society.

These practices must be uprooted and the ways in which they are manifested, resolutely checked. In their place we must develop new practices in accord with the process of defining and strengthening the party, the state and the mass organizations—a process which is being carried out under the firm guidance of our Political Bureau in keeping with the directives of Comrade Fidel.

Methods of Party Leadership

The material which you have studied during the last few days, and specifically the Communiqué of the Secretariat of the Central Committee which we have already mentioned, together with the address given by Comrade Blas at the inauguration of the Provincial Assembly of Matanzas, explain very clearly and in considerable detail the reason behind the leadership role of the party during the phase of the construction of socialism, and the importance of upholding respect for the party in its role of leadership, endorsed and ratified publicly by each and every one of the delegates to people's power present here. We will not, therefore, dwell more on this matter.

We wish to warn against the possible ways in which hypertrophy of our institutions, bad habits and practice and general confusion as regards the role of and the relations between the various institutions to which the communiqué of the Secretariat refers, may become manifest and despite the fact that these have, to a large extent, been eliminated over the past two years, they are still strong enough to make the warning I give to each and every one of you valid; delegates to people's power, members of the executive committees, heads or possible heads of the administration departments, heads of the mass organizations and, especially, you, comrade party leaders. You must always bear in mind that the party is unquestionably the maximum agency of leadership within our society, and that it not only directs other party organizations and their members, but also the state organs and the mass organizations and, therefore, must also direct the organs of people's power.

But you must bear in mind, and I wish to make special emphasis of this, the methods and channels through which the party should exercise its leadership role. Remember always, in your day-to-day activity, that the party does not administer, that it must never meddle in the daily routine work of the organs of people's power and its administrative apparatus, and must always refrain from handing down decisions that fall within the responsibility of the organs of people's power.

The Party Must Not Replace the Organs of Power

You must remember that the party is the highest political and ideological authority in the province, but that the maximum state and administrative authority in the municipalities, the regional districts and the province of Matanzas does not rest with the party organs, but with the organs of people's power, and that each level of people's power is only directly subordinate, as regards state and administrative responsibility, to the higher levels of people's power, and not to the party. The party must neither replace nor encroach upon the administration and the organs of people's power, nor violate their powers.

You must also bear in mind that directives, resolutions and decisions of the party have no legally binding or administrative powers, but are only binding for party organizations and agencies and their membership, and even then, if any member does not carry them out, he may only be sanctioned politically and even expelled from the party. But the party has no coercive apparatus to force its members to follow party discipline.

Remember that, in order to direct state agencies and the organs of people's power, as regards non-party members, the party only has political power, the correctness of the party line, its guidelines, the strength of its example and the confidence it inspires and that its only methods can be those which convince and persuade.

The party, at the different provincial levels, must be well informed of the plans, tasks, responsibilities and problems of the organs of people's power. It must give its opinion on important and fundamental questions which come before those organs. It must supervise the fulfilment of the duties assigned to them, if they stick to their functions as established by the higher organs of the party and government. They must help co-ordinate the activities of people's

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power with other state and mass organizations; control and assist the organs of people's power in selecting and appointing the best personnel for the various administrative posts subordinate to it; to contribute to the education and improvement of personnel; to establish guidelines and make suggestions relating to the organs of people's power in order to improve their work and guarantee the fulfilment of their responsibilities; to help achieve through the party apparatus and its membership, the most successful evolution of those organs. But the party must do all this without ever infringing on the state's responsibilities and without ever usurping the autonomous decision-making powers of the organs of people's power.

"Complementary but Different"

The party must guide and direct the work of the organs of people's power within the well-defined framework of the responsibilities of the party and state and of their "complementary but different" roles, the fraternal work relations that should exist between the leading organs of the party and people's power at each level. The party can and must make suggestions, proposals, recommendations; it must counsel and guide the organs of people's power, but must never "hand down decisions", never impose decisions, never undertake any manner of reprisal as regards an organ of people's power or members of such organs who do not agree with or will not carry out something the party has suggested, proposed, recommended, advised and set down as a guideline.

The party must use as its principal means to guarantee that its guidelines and criteria are put into practice by the organs of people's power, the work of the party members who are also delegates to those organs or members of executive committees. Party members "wherever they may work or whatever post they hold, are obliged to comply with and carry out the decisions of the party and to convince (and neither force nor oblige) the non-party members of the fairness of those decisions and the need to apply them".

If, after exhausting all the methods and resources within their authority and all their relations with other institutions, the leadership of the party at a given level (the municipal level, for example) does not convince the organs of people's power at that level to follow a recommendation or guideline that it considers important, it must then refer to the next highest level of the party (in this case, the regional) to discuss the matter at the regional level of people's power. If no agreement is reached at this level either, the regional party leadership (if the matter is of sufficient importance) must refer to the provincial level of the party to discuss the problem at the provincial level of people's power. In the event (and it seems highly unlikely that this would be the case) that no agreement is reached at this level either, the matter would be taken before the National Constitutional Commission of the organs of people's power in Matanzas, and in the last resort, if agreement were still not reached, the Political Bureau and the Council of Ministers.

These are the principles on which relations between members of the people's power executive committees, the directors and other functionaries of the administrative departments, on the one hand, and, on the other, members of the executive bureaux and heads and other functionaries of the departments of the party committees who are responsible for the same work at different levels of leadership should be based.

It so happens that many members of the executive bureaux and the heads or functionaries of many party committees will have through the party, and all the sphere of activity which the party covers, the responsibility of supervising that which is directed and administered by one or another of the administrative departments of people's power. And so, for example, at the provincial and regional levels we find in the party committees a department of culture, science and education and a member of the corresponding executive bureau of the party, supervising through the party, cultural and other activities. We also find at the same level of people's power a department of culture and a member of the corresponding executive committee of people's power, directing and administering this activity for the state. And the same is true in other spheres such as commerce, the hotels and restaurants, transportation, etc.

Respect the Essential Autonomy of the Organs of People's Power

In each and every case, the leaders and officials of the party have the duty and the means of knowing, controlling and guiding the development of a given activity, and of evaluating and helping the respective party organs which are in charge of that activity. To this effect, the closest and most brotherly relations and co-ordination of work should prevail among party cadres and the corresponding cadres of people's power.

But, in every instance, the concrete administrative decisions with regard to the management and use of personnel and material resources for a given task fall within the jurisdiction of people's power organs, management, their cadres and officials and not within the jurisdiction of the party's organs, mechanisms and cadres. The latter can make suggestions or recommendations for the use of particular human or material resources, but without exerting undue pressure to impose a decision, since that decision is not their responsibility. They can and should control the management and use of these

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resources, warn the people's power organs about any mismanagement, inform the corresponding party organs about it and, by means of the procedures explained previously, intervene and influence the decision made in a decisive way.

But the party must never take over purely administrative procedures which do not fall within its jurisdiction. Undue interference will make its relations with people's power organs ineffective. The party must lead organs of people's power without becoming their guardian. The party must direct organs of people's power without becoming their godfather.

The Party must Concentrate on its own Responsibilities

The leading party organ at a given level and its members can request permission to attend a meeting of the people's power assembly or executive committee at that level in order to give the party's opinion on a given issue and ask that this opinion be analysed by the corresponding organ of people's power. It is always necessary to bear in mind that the people's power assembly and executive committee meetings are the responsibility of the organs of people's power and not of the party. These meetings must be presided over by the chairman of the executive committee or a member of the organ of people's power chosen by those present at the meeting, but must never be presided over by a member of a party organ, who may be attending the meeting as a guest, even though he or she may be the First Secretary of the party at that given level.

It is always necessary to respect the essential autonomy of the organs of people's power in their character of state organs. Otherwise, as expressed in a resolution of the Bolshevik party put forward by Lenin, "The lack of a strict limitation in the party's functions and its interference in affairs outside of its jurisdiction lead to the lack of strict and well defined responsibilities in a task which has been assigned, increasing bureaucracy within the party organs themselves, which in trying to do everything end up doing nothing—the all-important specialization of administrative officials, the analysis of an issue in all its details and the gathering of truly practical experience. In a word, making difficult the correct organization of work".

To strengthen and strictly define the role of the party, it is necessary to remove from its jurisdiction all state and administrative tasks, which the party has had to take over until now because the power institutions and mechanisms had not yet been established. The establishment of organs of people's power and their correct functioning will enable the party to concentrate on and carry out thoroughly its own responsibilities, playing its leading role within our revolutionary process with greater efficiency.

The functions and responsibilities of the organs of people's power must also be clearly and well defined in relation to those of the mass organizations, especially those of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), which look after people's activities in such a way as to coincide with the responsibilities of organs of people's power more than with any other organization. Until now, because of the absence of organs of people's power, the CDRs have had to assume some of the tasks which should and will properly fall within the jurisdiction of the organs of people's power, as for example is the case of the people's inspectors of retail sales and public transportation.

The mass organizations: CDRs, National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC), the trade union branches and the youth organizations are meant to fulfil a dual function; first, providing suitable leadership so that the revolutionary process can flow in an organized, determined and decisive fashion, making room for the powerful contribution of initiatives and efforts by various people's sectors in the construction of socialism and matching their interests with the overall interest of the nation; and secondly, providing leadership which reflects the specific interests and problems of each sector which do not always fall within the scope of activity and work of institutions such as the party and the state agencies, whose fundamental responsibility is the strategic objectives of the revolution and questions of general and common interest to all the people.

We can combine these general interests with the specific and particular interests of each sector with the help of mass organizations.

With regard to the fulfilment of this dual function, the role of the mass organizations has been masterly synthesised in Lenin's words, calling them "transmission belts" which link the vanguard to the rest of the working masses.

The trade unions, because of the important role they play in the production and service units under the administration of people's power, must undertake fundamental tasks concerning their relations with the latter and in other aspects of the economic activity of the municipality, region or province. Because of the territorial characteristics of the CDRs, ANAP and FMC and their work content, these organizations are meant to play a most important role in supporting certain tasks and responsibilities of people's power organs.

Finding the most suitable ways of collaboration and co-ordination between these mass organizations and the people's power organs is your task. One of the results derived from the people's power experience in Matanzas province should be a more concrete and varied definition of these ways and methods.

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Decisive Tasks Ahead

Comrade delegates, members of the executive committee and officials of the administrative departments of people's power, before you are tasks of extraordinary historic importance, the results of which will be decisive for the future development of our country.

You are faced with the responsibility of putting the concrete, newly-defined forms of our state to the test, because so far these principles are only theory, even though they are of course solid in the sense that they are based on Marxist-Leninist principles which we must simply adjust to our specific conditions.

You are also faced with the responsibility of finding answers to many of the questions in this field for which we have not even a theoretical solution, so that at the end of the experiment we will have results that will be as complete and far-reaching as possible.

With your work you will have to demonstrate that the actual functioning of the organs of people's power implies greater efficiency in the work of the state apparatus and because of this you must wage a resolute struggle against bureaucracy in all its forms, such as endless paper work, passing the buck, needless delays in solving problems, filling offices with unnecessary workers, etc.

We must prevent the organs of people's power from being needlessly packed with people. Nowhere must there be a single man more than is needed to do an efficient job!

As Fidel indicated on July 26th, you must strive for the greatest possible saving of material and human resources, for maximum economic efficiency and for strict accounting and control. . . .

Guardians of Socialist Legality

You must be the zealous guardians of socialist legality, "enemies of the old law and pillars of the new", as Fidel said, you must be on your guard against any violation of the law and see to it that no agreement or resolution of the organs of people's power contradict existing laws.

Moreover, the organs of people's power must not accept or carry out any resolution from the superior levels of people's power or the central state agencies which violate existing laws.

The organs of people's power must fulfil and see to it that everyone, and that includes both institutions and people in an area under their jurisdiction, strictly fulfil the law. In order to do so the organs of people's power should seek the aid of the state prosecutors whose work must be made more efficient, dynamic and effective.

As Fidel has said, in all the administrative branches of people's power and in all the centres of production and services under people's power, you must instil the habit of treating the people with respect and take all necessary measures to ensure this. . . .

Solzhenitsyn, Gulag and the Solzhenitsyn Industry.

Ivor Montagu.

I

The biography of Solzhenitsyn is fairly well-known. He has himself summarised it in a few pages. It has been elaborated (generally without authorisation) abroad, largely by deduction from his fiction (the basis of his most important works being his own experience) or pieced together from public documents and recollections of friends.

He was born posthumously after his father had died in a shooting accident in 1918 in Kislovodsk (S. Russia, just west of the Caucasus). In date at least, therefore, however alien spiritually, he is a 'child of the revolution'. His family were country folk—'landowners' his opponents in USSR are fond of claiming; 'rich peasants' let us leave it, he himself takes pride in their efficiency and education.

Brought up by his mother, who became a shorthand typist, he was taken at the age of six to Rostov, grew up, like others of his contemporaries, a Young Pioneer and a YCLer, graduated from Rostov High School at 18, studied maths and physics at the University, took correspondence courses at the Moscow Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature. In 1940 he married as first wife a fellow-student, Reshetovskaya (quite clearly the original of Nerzhin's wife Nadya in *The First Circle*).

The war in 1941 found him already a young physics teacher. Conscripted, he served at first as a

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groom and driver with horse transport, then was transferred to an artillery school. From November 1942 till his arrest in East Prussia in February 1945, Solzhenitsyn served with distinction in the front line with the artillery, earning two decorations and being promoted captain.

Arrest

The basis of his arrest was, he explains, "certain disrespectful remarks about Stalin" made in correspondence with a former school friend[1]. (The Military Collegium of the Supreme Court that in 1956 found his conviction "incorrect", the charge of anti-Soviet propaganda and endeavouring to establish an anti-Soviet organisation unproved, and that his actions did not constitute a crime, also referred to his having written "of the artistic and ideological shortcomings of the works of many Soviet authors and the air of unreality that pervades many of them". The Collegium firmly declares this was no "proof of crime", but it is of biographical interest in showing how deep-seated has been his quarrel with the literary establishment.)

Anyway Solzhenitsyn was sentenced, not in his presence, to eight years in a detention camp, served about one year in a mixed-type correctional work camp;[2] four years (as a mathematician) in a scientific research institution near Moscow conducted under the prison administration;[3] the next three as miner, bricklayer and foundryman in Kazakhstan in a special camp for political prisoners only.[4]

Here, after completion of the eight-year term and without further trial, he was notified of exile for life in the same area. Here he taught at the local school. A tumour, unsuccessfully operated on in the camp, redeveloped as a cancer. His life was nearly lost, but this was cured at a clinic in Tashkent in 1953-4.[5]

In 1956, some time after Stalin's death, the Supreme Court's rehabilitation order was promulgated, the exile order was revoked, Solzhenitsyn transferred to school-teaching in Russia, first in Vladimir, then in Ryazan. His marriage with Reshetovskaya was resumed (during his exile and at his urging she had formed a new family connection) and this time lasted twelve years. They separated in 1969, just before his award of the Nobel Prize, she having discovered that he had formed an association with a scientist (Svetlana), whom he has now married as second wife and by whom he has had several children.

[1] N. Vitkevich

[2] The play *The Love Child and the Innocent.*

[3] *The First Circle.*

[4] *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.*

[5] *Cancer Ward.*

His Writings

According to Solzhenitsyn's account, he had always been ambitious to be a writer, "even as a child" turned out "the usual juvenilia", which no-one published. For him, his career as mathematics and physics student had always been very much a second-best. Even under the grim conditions of camp he had scribbled scraps, poems, a play, notes and preserved them all at every risk. It was only after release that he could seriously undertake authorship. He is an assiduous as well as prolific writer, engages on several undertakings simultaneously, takes years over his principal novels, is always adding to and altering everything he writes. So far as can be ascertained, the order of his productions (and this is important) is somewhat as follows:

(i) Written in Kazakhstan, the play *The Love Girl and the Innocent* and, in 1955, *First Circle* begun.

(ii) in Ryazan, from about 1957-1964, the short story *Matryona's Place*, the novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and the play *A Candle in the Wind* (all before 1960), followed by other short stories e.g. *An Incident at Krechetovka Station* (1962), and various what he calls "microstories" (fables).

Publication of "Ivan Denisovich"

He says it was only after 1960 "when secret authorship began to wear me down", and encouraged by the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, that he decided to risk all and send *Ivan Denisovich* to Tvardovsky, the editor of *Novy Mir*. Tvardovsky was enthusiastic, Khrushchev welcomed the book, its publication in the magazine caused a sensation, and a controversy. Tvardovsky followed up with other of the short stories and Solzhenitsyn wrote, and published there, rousing fresh controversy, *For the Good of the Cause*. It was in this period he became a fully-fledged member of the Writer's Union (Ryazan Branch), began *Cancer Ward* (1963), all the time working away (without, he says, for various reasons immediate intention of publication) at *First Circle*, *Gulag*, and a project he had cherished since childhood, for his father had fought in the Great War precisely on that East Prussian front where the son was to succeed him, *August 1914*.

So far, till 1965, this is the story of a man who (like, alas, thousands of others) experienced years of injustice, a self-made writer whose product bore the stamp of this experience, whose spiritual reintegration in Soviet cultural life still hung in the balance.

Ivan Denisovich had overwhelmingly been welcomed by the great majority of its Soviet readers as importing a new note of frankness about matters not previously 'discussable'. It had clearly been less welcome to others, their displeasure muted because the frankness was then officially backed. The short stories accentuated these differences. But so far the

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issue of his development seemed by no means decided.

Polemicist and Crusader

Now, however (1966), a new period in Solzhenitsyn's personal history took over. From now on the polemicist, the crusader, becomes more important than the literary creator. Two major literary works, already well under way, have been continued, completed, added to or polished. *Gulag*, original version, seems to have been more of less finished by 1968. It is designed in several parts, of which four or five are already printed in various forms.[6] The Great-War work, apparently now planned as only first part of a trilogy continuing through 1918, is also out. No other major enterprise is known to be under way. The time has wholly been occupied otherwise, in battling for publication at home, arguing about publication abroad, in Open Letters, Messages, Proclamations, Press Conferences—addressed in ever-ascending magnificence to the Union of Soviet Writers, the Nobel Prize Committee, the Soviet Government, the entire world, etc., etc.

All this has proceeded on the background of what I have appropriately termed "the Solzhenitsyn industry"—the immensely profitable, both politically and financially, exploitation of his works and activities abroad, which becomes henceforward inseparable from his career and which culminated in his expulsion and loss of citizenship. Whatever he may be as a politician or a moralist—and despite his pose as a simple author—Solzhenitsyn has certainly shown himself a pretty shrewd operator, taking advantage to the full of every legal right and possibility afforded him by current Soviet law and practice in a way that gives the lie to the claim, so often pressed by the industry, that nothing virtually has changed in USSR since Stalin's day.

It is impossible to read the published material dealing with this period of bull-baiting by Solzhenitsyn without the impression that the author has enjoyed himself hugely, The data consist of public documents,[7] together with his notes of meetings with his colleagues of the Union of Writers to discuss his works, protests, expulsions, appeals, etc. (Of course the text of these latter have the same sort of evidential value as would summaries by Richard Nixon of his White House conversations, but they do have a certain ring of basic plausibility despite their role of Solzhenitsyn as ever-dignified perpetual hero, scoring off the other participants by modest silence or neat introduction, here and there, of a ridiculing thrust.)

The battle began by Solzhenitsyn submitting the first part of *Cancer Ward* to Tvardovsky, who—as some other writers who read it—was enthusiastic, and *Novy Mir* setting it up in type. Then obstacles began to appear. Several times it seemed on the verge of breaking through. It was a year or more before the type was broken up.

What had happened, it seems, was that some months earlier, the police authorities, in searching a house for some reason quite unconnected with Solzhenitsyn, had come upon a copy of a very early play *The Feast of the Victors*, written in camp in passionate anger at his unjust arrest and which Solzhenitsyn is now vigorously anxious to disavow. Solzhenitsyn claims that, to discredit him in the eyes of those who might otherwise have endorsed *Cancer Ward*, this "private", "discarded", manuscript was confidentially shown around by the authorities and later, to blacken him further, leaked abroad.[8]

At around the same time adverse mention appeared in the Soviet press with phrases implying, with no attempted warranty whatever, that there had been something phoney or incomplete about the Supreme Court's rehabilitation order. Solzhenitsyn struck back with an open letter to the delegates of the Writers' Union Congress, attacking censorship and demanding that the Union protect him.

"Samizdat"

Here of course he had a very strong case, which was ignored or overruled. From that moment the gloves were off, Solzhenitsyn using every avenue of procedure open to him, including *Samizdat*, statements to and interviews with foreign journalists and

[6] In English, so far, the first two in one volume. In Russian, a continuation. And extracts from the last.

[7] Though the author seems not to be above issuing corrected and improved versions of his own without any indication that they have been modified (c.f. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, comment by Richard Boeth, *Newsweek* 18.3.74).

[8] There is a certain human inconsistency in Solzhenitsyn's attitudes. When it is a matter of the past history of others, he is all for rubbing their noses in every detail, in the sacred name of truth. (This, of course, is not necessarily wrong, but it is not *always* the best way of encouraging effective remedy). But when it is a matter concerning himself he invokes at once the individual's sacred right to privacy: an author may be judged only by what he chooses for the public to see. Thus we are never told exactly what in his letters from the East Prussian front in 1944-5 provoked his arrest and followed at his examination. The Supreme Court has clearly exonerated this from *crime*, but after all this was wartime, and greater knowledge might help our understanding. (We know nothing, and the only other source, the other correspondent, Vitkevich, is critical, c.f. *The Last Circle*, Novosti). S. rages at the use of this play, which, after all, he had not destroyed but preserved. And he has threatened his first wife, who was with him throughout the writing of *Gulag*, with breach of copyright action if in her reminiscences she quotes any of his letters.

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relying increasingly on support from the Solzhenitsyn industry abroad—foreign radio, foreign institutions and foreign—including emigré—praise and organisations.

There is nothing in Soviet law to prevent *samizdat*, that is, the copying and circulation of works in manuscript; there is only an offence if their contents can be proved to violate the law. Important works are quite normally circulated among friends and colleagues in manuscript or typescript, for comment before publication, and there is nothing to prevent them from being copied.

Indeed—a point often not realised abroad—though absence of printing and publication of Solzhenitsyn's later works in his own country, and their consequent absence of a many-million circulation, has certainly hindered mass-scale access to them, they have equally certainly become widely-known, read and discussed there; Russian-language foreign broadcasts read copiously from them and, at least in intellectual circles, there must be few who wanted to read them who have not found it possible to do so, and to gain knowledge by word-of-mouth or copying of his interviews and declarations.

This alone suffices to puncture a hole right through the scenario meticulously peddled by the Solzhenitsyn industry: namely that there is in effect a groaning population in the USSR, longing for liberation from its miseries and in particular deeply sympathising with Solzhenitsyn in whose works, if only the government would allow them, it would find moral sustenance and comfort.

"The Industry"

It is quite true that there are several within USSR, perhaps particularly among intellectuals and youth, as well as many among friends and supporters of the Soviet Union outside[9], who question the desirability of censorship of literature, and similar administrative measures, under Socialism, or to the full extent still currently considered necessary by the Soviet authorities. But there is little or no sympathy at all in the USSR for the total negativism of Solzhenitsyn's outlook as it has increasingly manifested itself—blind to Soviet achievements, despising all compatriots who display happiness or confidence, regarding any not in accord with him (even among fellow 'dissenters') as stupid or corrupt; and there are many more Soviet readers acquainted with it, not merely through the adverse comment of others, but directly, than is commonly supposed.

Reality, in such matters, can be double-sided. Always the interpenetration of opposites. Solzhenitsyn no doubt saw himself as the paladin battling (almost) single-handed against continuation of the oppression that had crushed him throughout his unjust sentence and beyond, now sustained, in the struggle he claimed he waged not only to benefit his people but for all peoples, by the sympathy abroad of such well-known lovers of truth and liberty as the *Daily Telegraph* and the CIA. The enemies outside no doubt saw him—as they treated him—as a convenient, a gullible, and an expendable, tool. It is all a matter, as Lenin put it, of "Who—Whom?"

An instant best-seller with his first published work, at home almost a Lenin Prize, abroad the new Tolstoy, the new Dostoyevsky—this was heady stuff for the one-time schoolboy who headed an exercise book "Complete Works of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Vol. I. Part I"[10], and the novice fresh from exile who wrote "The most difficult thing to bear was that I could not get my works judged by people with literary training."

Such vanity made him a sucker, a predestined victim for the industry whose commercial and political interests alike bade it laud him to the skies, in the end—a fall-guy. Throughout the long polemical struggle around his writings the conviction of rectitude—most fatal of fairy gifts—has grown upon him.

Never once, it seems, has he dared put to himself that so necessary injunction of Cromwell[11]: "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken." Never once has anyone, friend or critic, taken him by the hand and said frankly, in a way that had influence upon him, "Bethink you, perhaps you are not such a faultless writer after all".

II

The late Roger Fry, who was a formalist, once said that, in order to judge a work of art, it was necessary to dismiss content so as to respond to the elements of composition, to get oneself into the frame of mind when one could look upon a picture of the Virgin in exactly the same way as one looked at a still-life of a bottle. No matter how often he listened to it, he said, he would never know what sort of music "God Save the King" was, the associations were too strong.

It is this sort of circumstance that, certainly, however long he lives, will inevitably deprive Solzhenitsyn from achieving his declared ambition, to hear an unbiased judgment by his peers.

[9] c.f. *Un debat sur "l'affaire Soljenitsyne"*, Cahiers Marxistes, Brussels, May '74; *Scientific Socialism and Freedom of Speech and Expression*; *Our Views regarding the Solzhenitsyn Affair*, Akahata, 20.3.74. (trans. in CC of CP of Japan Bulletin for Information for Abroad No. 311, April '74); and e.g. statements by John Gollan, Tony Chater and others on behalf of the CPGB.

[10] Vitkevich in *The Last Circle*, op. cit. p. 139.

[11] To the Church of Scotland.

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The chosen themes throughout his works, the passions they arouse, the far-reaching contemporaneous issues dealt with, in later stages his heroic (?or provocative?) attitudes in their defence—all obstruct objective judgment pro or con, and in most cases those reviewing or commenting upon them do not even attempt one. Solzhenitsyn possibly does not realise how much the reception of his books abroad, whether by reviewer or public, owes to the automatic response to sedulously propagated advertisement, the following of fashion, the efforts of the political or commercial wings of the Solzhenitsyn industry. Responses within USSR have, for corresponding however different reasons, been even more involved in extra-literary considerations, and it is worth recalling, apropos of his opening shot *Ivan Denisovich*, that the (rather inept) comparison with Tolstoy first appeared in *Pravda* (23.11.62).

A Good Writer?

Is Solzhenitsyn a "good" writer? The answer can only be by the old counter "it depends what you mean by 'good'." It is not a word which can possibly be applied unqualified to a writer so mono-orientated and so blinkered as Solzhenitsyn. It is too ambiguous and all-embracing a word. Nevertheless efforts to depreciate his ability and dismiss his work as insignificant are quite misplaced. He is a painstaking, shrewd, persuasive and, in nearly all cases, *powerful* writer. When describing circumstances of which he has personal experience, and especially the emotions and anxieties of characters toward whom he feels sympathetic, he can probe deeply into the human heart. He chooses to write about matters of the highest import to society: justice, compassion, truth, conscience.

How far his embitterment distorts his vision, still more, his presentation, is not the question here. The point is that we have few enough writers in the West who deal with such questions at all. To do so is outstanding, and when the moral reprobation deals with somewhere else, more comfortable. This is what has made him God's gift to the Cold War warriors. The "transmission of pains and fears" "warning against moral and social dangers" (to use his own phrases) were welcome in USSR too, at first; the elements of obsession, truculence and distortion have gradually vitiated it. But these errors and limitations have been carefully blurred abroad by the Solzhenitsyn industry—where they were harder for a foreign public to recognise anyway. And the way foreign criticism has abetted the process by its uncritical chorus has contributed at least as much as the frustrations imposed upon him at home in encouraging him to the vanity that has at last, with magnification and self-exposure, now climaxed in such grave self-damage.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich is so good a work because it is plain description without exaggeration and undistorted by the Messiah complex. (*The Love Girl and the Innocent* had something of the same quality, but like so much of his later work was ego-centred and in its sentimentality is plainly by a more prentice hand.) It is in the later output that his faults begin to show more obviously.

The shorter works are so much conditioned by their obvious purpose as to lose touch with reality and thereby defeat their object. *Matryona's Place* is clearly designed to remind society of the virtues of humility, unselfishness, consideration for others—an admirable, nay essential, aim, no less necessary in Socialist society than in any other. But in it no-one—not anyone except the saintly central figure—is half-way decent; everyone else (but the Solzhenitsyn figure, a detached narrator) is selfish and indifferent to the point of evil. The message is damaged by its exaggeration.

For the Good of the Cause roused a battle among readers in the Soviet Union: here the teachers and their pupils, fired by desire to serve, accomplish miracles by building a school extension in their spare time, only to be deprived of it for self-glory by officials who prefer it for unsuited use as a research institution. The story was acclaimed by some readers who had experienced instances of such abuse of power, denounced by others as a malicious caricature. What else could a reasonable person have expected? There are cases, there must be, where the situation has been as Solzhenitsyn depicted it; and, where the issue emerges plainly as in his picture, one's feelings must be all for Solzhenitsyn's weighted thesis—that the advantages of a possible acceleration of industrial development have here been outweighed by the harm of a wound inflicted on the idealism, and so on the precious future development, of the young.

Distortion and Misrepresentation

But for every such plain case there must have been dozens of others more closely balanced, times and circumstances that enhanced the urgency of industrial development at all costs, cases where the authorities have been conscientious and the disappointing decision inevitable, made honestly, explained and accepted. Solzhenitsyn's hatred does not allow him to present the problem in true terms—the need always to give *due* attention to both urgencies. It distorts and so misrepresents. This arbitrariness in the pictures he paints is highlighted by the accidental juxtaposition in one English edition[12] of this story with a sketch of young hooligans jeering at an Easter procession. The protagonists are alike schoolchildren; in both works they are of an

[12] *Stories and Prose Poems*, Penguin.

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age. In the first, all, with no exception, are angels, in the second all, with none abstaining, are demons. Both stories could have happened. Together, the special pleading is too naked. Life, not even in the USSR, is so simple as this.

I am far from objecting to the fable that highlights by emphasis. This is the weapon of the writer, as caricature is the weapon of the artist. Each of the stories above-examined is defensible in itself. What I am condemning is the industry—peddlers and critics alike—that presents them in the West as naturalistic pictures of Soviet socialist society. When one considers the whole sketch series—all the short stories and microstories together—the atmosphere presented is one of unmitigated social evil.

Of course evil is present in Soviet society. In the whole world where is it absent? And of course where it is present it must be fought and eliminated. But this cannot be done, or even contributed to persuasively, by those who see nothing else. Savonarolas are not all that popular. Nor all that right. Nor are Savonarolas Shakespeares, or even Tolstoys or Dostoyevskys. When Shakespeare makes Hamlet say "Something is rotten in the State of Denmark", he means not only in the England of his particular day and age but actually or potentially in the human beings and man-made societies of every age and day. (Which is why he has still something to tell us.)

Not the Whole Truth

Solzhenitsyn is so eager to damn the people he has come to hate that he deliberately denies caring whether the evils he depicts exist elsewhere. I write only of my own country, he insists, I know nothing of others. This cannot be true, and it vitiates all credibility in his judgment. Nowhere can be as unmitigated black as Solzhenitsyn paints existence in his own country. No doubt, no doubt at all many of the evil people and evil events that he describes are real. But they are not the whole and by not being based on whole truth his picture does indeed become a slander.

Two at least of the three long novels are widely known abroad, and all three have been reported at the head of the best-seller lists for long periods. The English text of the three totals just under 2,000 pages and it would be interesting to know if they have been equally widely read, or how far their distribution depends upon the industry. Alas, no opinion poll is likely to be held to disclose how many of the books begun have been read to the end, or on what page the venturer gave up.

Two contain material of the highest human and literary value, those based on his own experience, what he saw, felt, imagined from it that others felt. He worked in a research institute for prisoners, so did the central figure of *First Circle*—Nerzhin. He was a mathematician, so was Nerzhin. He was treated in a cancer hospital, so was the central figure of *Cancer Ward*—Kostoglotov. There is nothing whatever wrong in this. A reality comes from it.

But it is significant that in the third novel, *August 1914*, where he has to operate solely from imagination, not all the most meticulous citation of contemporary journals and newspapers, analysis of documents and communiqués, poring over maps and diagrams, brings it for a moment to life. The civilian characters—students, teachers, provincial estate-owners and relatives (said to have as originals the author's immediate family connections)—read like a stilted rehash from the period's Russian classics, cardboard and secondhand. The military manoeuvres, respective strategies, tactics, logistics, battles are, indeed, an extraordinary tour-de-force: the whole of the author's great skill as a story-teller is devoted to a clear, disentangled account of the offensive and its defeat and a plausible explanation of the behaviour of the various generals—but it suffers from the basic unreality of a Boys' Own Paper romance.

The officer-hero, Vorotyntsov (the ego-figure in this book) is so unbelievably sage, courageous, all-seeing, noble[13], outspoken to those of equal or senior rank, condescending to the faithful rank and file, and the final scene at the end in which this hero recklessly and bravely delivers a magnificent telling-off to the assembled General Staff is so obviously a piece of personal wish-fulfilment, that the unreality becomes painful. No doubt for a final appraisal of this historical enterprise we should wait for its completion. (The 714 English pages so far are only the first lump of the trilogy.)

But what of the responsibility meanwhile of the Western chorus of so-called critics who have not hinted at a single weakness?

Human Response

The merit of *The First Circle* is the strength and poignancy with which it delves into the plight of human beings exposed to ordeals and harshness they have for the most part not deserved, harassed not merely by discomforts but by arbitrariness and affront to their sense of justice, the discussion of questions of conscience, the anguish of fear. These are not light qualities. The merits of *Cancer Ward* are still more general[14]. Almost as in a medieval morality, numerous personalities of the most varied

[13] Complete with a wife who does not understand him.

[14] Lukacs judged it Solzhenitsyn's most important novel, and during the discussions among the author's colleagues in USSR about its possible publication there it found many advocates.

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type are brought in contact with death, either as an immediate and irresistible fate threatening themselves, or as an antagonist to combat for the sake of others. The human response is shown in diversity and not lacking in grandeur.

Yet even in these two books the defects that constitute Solzhenitsyn's limitations as literary creator and moralist are patent. There is no space here for reviewing these major works in extenso. But the three faults following are pervasive and should have been identified long ago.

Some Faults

Snobbery:

The figures he clearly best understands, and whose indignities and sufferings mean most to him are always educated persons, intelligentsia. (With the ego-figure in each story always a paragon.) Lower-caste figures—peasant-soldiers in *August 1914*, the gardener in *The First Circle*, Matryona, unsophisticated patients in *Cancer Ward* and *The Right Hand*—these tend to be stereotypes of virtue, loyal servant-sages, as characterful as cotton-wool and as real as Rousseau's noble savage.

An overflowing hatred:

There has been nothing in Solzhenitsyn's experience to encourage him to love his enemies. The traditional Christian injunction is to hate the sin but love the sinners. Though Solzhenitsyn naively recommends an unspecified Christianity as a remedy for the USSR's and the world's ills, he does not apply this advice, where it could be helpful, to his work as a writer. Harmful human beings are, in reality, often quite ordinary—e.g. Eichmann—and to make them all monstrous or grotesque in fiction does not necessarily heighten conviction.

In *Cancer Ward* Rusanov, the selfish, brash, insensitive, hectoring official who becomes a patient is real enough to make the author's desired point—but the author cannot stop there; by making him a denouncer and so murderer of his friend and rival as well, he weakens the portrait by turning the typical into the melodramatic and, so, less universal.

Similarly, whatever the truth about Stalin, the snivelling, incompetent, trembling coward that Solzhenitsyn paints in *The First Circle* cannot possibly adequately present the original. The war could not have been won had Stalin really been like that, nor could he possibly have made the amply documented impression recorded not only by his colleagues and subordinates of the wartime staff but by all western statesmen with whom he came in contact. This sudden fantasy element[15] throws an aura of what may be unmerited doubt on all the carefully portrayed and otherwise convincing detail of the prisoners' circumstances.

A blinkered lack of proportion:

Let a single key incident from each book suffice: the central 'plot' situation in *First Circle* is the problem of a scientist whose discovery of a means of identifying voice-prints results in ruin of a man for an impulsive act of kindness—the author does not seem to be aware that the same principle has long been old hat in the West where its applications are familiar. At the end of *Cancer Ward*, as thematic climax of Soviet man's inhumanity and so failure—Solzhenitsyn chooses a shocking spectacle—the chief character, emerging from his house of pain, visits the zoo and near its entrance comes upon a monkey blinded by the meaningless malice of vandals who threw vitriol in its eyes. The author appears to be unaware that such arbitrary violence—from its position in the narrative clearly selected to express a conclusion epitomising all that has gone before—is an incident so commonplace and frequent *outside the USSR* that there is probably not a zoo in the kingdom that, for all its vigilance, does not suffer in the same kind of way.

As a reminder of how far every society, of whatever character, has yet to go before it realises heaven upon earth, as a fresh warning of how difficult it is to prevent harm that revolts the great majority of human beings from repeated surreptitious perpetration by a very few—yes, this latter could be an appropriate and indeed salutary symbol. But as an epitome of something particular to this "state of Denmark" only—as it has certainly been presented by the Solzhenitsyn industry, understood by its readership, and undoubtedly intended by its author—no, it will not do.

Pointing out such faults truthfully by critics abroad, early enough, might have helped to steady Solzhenitsyn as a character and save him as a writer. Instead, the undiluted press paeans have fed his weaknesses and encouraged him to inflate them.

It is these that mar and even negate *Gulag*.

III

Gulag is the acronym for the Chief Directorate of State Labour Camps. *Gulag Archipelago* is the ingenious and graphic name chosen by Solzhenitsyn to designate the numerous prisons, camps and other penal institutions scattered during the years over the territory of the USSR. Only a first volume has so far appeared in English, containing Part One, beginning with the author's own arrest and covering the development of laws, the actual procedures of arrest, investigation, condemnation and penalty by the security services and administrative organs operating with them, from (he claims) the earliest years of the revolution until the present day and Part Two, the methods of transportation and transfer of those

[15] Likewise the exaggerated caricature of the prison visit by the friendly tourist.

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sentenced. Further volumes, containing a number of further 'Parts', are, it seems, to cover the detention and labour camps themselves. A Seventh Part: "No Stalin" reportedly deals with "The Law Today"[16]. The first published 'Part' alone takes up nearly 500 pages and the book was begun, says its author, 16 years ago.

Evidently, from what Solzhenitsyn has written and the energy with which the waiting industry outside has promoted this book, both have long regarded it as a mixture of a work of piety and a sort of ace in the hole, a bomb in a suitcase, to be used in case of emergency. If it has somewhat disappointed their hopes this is due in part to its own deficiencies and in part to the fact that it has not been and could not ever be, within or without the USSR, the sensation that either author or sponsors hoped and expected.

It is not true that the horrors and injustices have been hidden under a bushel, either here or there. They were declared at the time of the 20th Congress of the CPSU—and largely corrected thereafter—books by others describing them but more effectively because less fantastically have been published, in USSR and outside. In any case how could that be hidden which affected millions still living and their families? But many who suffered, as everyone knows who has met them, have drawn lessons entirely different and in a contrasting spirit from those Solzhenitsyn tries to teach us. And the present Soviet generation looks forward, with a healthy touch of scepticism no doubt, but certainly with confidence rather than Solzhenitsyn's despair. It is true that past crimes and errors have not yet been analysed in their roots and ramifications as profoundly as history demands and as mankind, needing to find ways to Socialism that avoid like pitfalls, would desire, but this gap cannot be filled by malice and blindness however eloquent.

Neither History nor Fiction

What is this book? Fiction, no—not as usually understood. History—no, not exactly that either. Even before publication, from the extracts receiving stunt presentation in the press, it was possible to diagnose it correctly as "a compound of personal and well-attested experience with hearsay inevitably less than accurate and even myth".[17] In fact it turns out to be a subtle tapestry woven so skilfully and carefully, recounting terrible events with all the author's narrative power, that it often needs hard and careful reading to discriminate between the three components.

So many simple errors appear, and are steadily being pointed out, that a certain amount of queasiness is growing up amidst its sponsors. An inconspicuous item appeared in the *Times* Diary (14.8.74): "The haste that attended the publication in this country of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* has resulted in an omission that all but scholarly readers may have overlooked. In the paperback edition, the sub-title, "An experiment in literary investigation." has been left out. According to the Russian scholar Michael Scammell . . . who was brought in to check the official translation . . . the sub-title is of vital importance. He says that it was a recognition by Solzhenitsyn that the book was not *history in the strictest sense*[18] . . . Michael Hyde, sales promotion director of the British publishers Collins, says that the sub-title will be included in the revised edition of the paperback which will be published at the turn of the year." Half a million copies of this edition, we are told in this same paragraph, were printed within a week of plates being received from New York, but apparently it is to take another six months after it has been recognised before this omission "of vital importance" can be corrected.[19]

It would be interesting to know how many millions, in how many languages, have read parts of *Gulag*—blazoned in extenso over the front pages of how many newspapers—and reviews of *Gulag* and leaders based on *Gulag*, or bought and read English paper-backs of *Gulag*, and perhaps editions elsewhere of *Gulag*, without having been provided with this warning "that all but scholarly readers may have overlooked", or indeed any other warning that qualifies this "not history in the strictest sense". Every cigarette packet on the market has to bear a health warning. Not *Gulag*. So much for the Solzhenitsyn industry. But can, in this case, the author of this "literary experiment" himself be fully exculpated? Apparently he calls it, in a preface to the French edition, "a panorama", but does he not, in a note to the English edition following the dedication, insist specifically that "it all took place just as it is here described"?

Which it did not.

For an important element of truth is lacking in this 'description-history-panorama'.

A witness testifying in this country swears (or affirms) to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth", and this trinity is an essential ingredient in the reliability of any testimony. Solzhenitsyn's account does not even regard this

[16] *Times*, 13.2.74. Extracts are quoted from a French publication.

[17] The present reviewer, in the *Morning Star*, 19.2.74. Reshetovskaya, less generously perhaps, dismisses it as "camp folklore" (Interview, *Le Figaro*, 2.5.74).

[18] I.M.'s italics.

[19] Actually, the significance of this sub-title was pointed out by Reshetovskaya as early as the *Le Figaro* interview (reported in the *Times* of 6.2.74), but this, it seems, failed to alert Collins.

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need. *Gulag*, at best, deliberately halts after the first two words.

Out of Context

Much of what is told in *Gulag* surely happened, but like anything else it cannot even begin to be understood out of its context.

To support his current thesis that evil began not with Stalin but with October 1917, Solzhenitsyn uggles with incidents and quotations, tells us nothing of their circumstances. For *Gulag* there were no Black Hundreds, no White Terror, no armed intervention by fourteen countries, no blockade (even of medical supplies and instruments) extended long after the war, no real counter-revolutionary plots, assassinations and sabotage aided from outside. There was no pressure between-wars in the Cordon Sanitaire and the Western build-up of Hitler, no Locarno offering him the route to the East, no necessity for the USSR to accelerate development in time to face the coming attack, no refusal of the Western (and US) governments to take the necessary measures to restrain Hitler, no betrayal by them of their treaty obligations and those of the League of Nations, no real subversive activities, no confusion sown by false enemy reports of treachery that could nevertheless not possibly be ignored.

What Solzhenitsyn reports as seen with his own eyes carries conviction; but it bears no reminder that these were days when the USSR was combatting, in virtual isolation, an attack that, as Churchill put it, inflicted more damage than any nation heretofore had suffered and survived; when leading statesmen among its nominal 'allies' (e.g. Brabazon, Truman) were recommending that Germany and USSR should be left to destroy each other and twenty million Soviet citizens died at enemy hands; nor does it anywhere recall that even before the war's end these 'allies' were leaving arms in the hands of surrendering Germans, dropping secret agents behind Soviet lines, and at peace negotiations demanding a virtual world hegemony based on atomic weapons—a technology developed in secret despite the undertaking to share all weapons knowledge with the USSR.

Before the ink was dry on the Potsdam agreement to eliminate fascism it was being ignored by the West, and the war that had achieved victory together had been replaced by the Cold War by which the USSR was to be isolated anew. Did all this have *no* place in influencing the trauma of the period in which Solzhenitsyn suffered? Solzhenitsyn does not mention any of it. How 'strict' dare 'history' not be?

Topsy Turvy World

All the author's old faults are here—writ large.

Once more—*snobbery:* Indeed his chief plaint against the revolution seems to be that it reversed the 'natural order'.[20]

Hatred—any enemy of the USSR is thereby a friend of Solzhenitsyn. Tsarism was better than socialism. The Nazis were better than the Bolsheviks, the Gestapo than Gulag. The GDR is a paradise for ex-nazis, it is in Western Germany that they have been eliminated from public life. In the imaginary world that Solzhenitsyn inhabits. everything is topsy-turvy, nothing is as it is.

The most extraordinary example of this attitude, widely commented on already,[21] is his justification of the Vlasovites. The Vlasovites were traitors recruited by the Nazis from among White emigrés in Europe and captured Soviet soldiers. They were used chiefly as punitive battalions behind the lines in occupied territory, becoming a byword for cruelty. Solzhenitsyn reminds us, correctly, of the terrible conditions (including deliberate starvation and even mass murder—though this he does not describe) that Soviet POWs in Hitler's hands had otherwise to face. He passes lightly over the fact that such a fate, rather than salvation by treason, was preferred by countless of their fellows and, in addition, blames not Hitler—but Stalin. Stalin was responsible for their deaths, he argues; he had abandoned them in that he had failed to sign the Geneva Convention on POWs. (As though any prisoner of the Nazis, anywhere, was saved by any bit of paper, or spared unless this suited some dubious scheme for winning advantage.) But Solzhenitsyn goes yet further. He sometimes goes so far as to represent some Vlasovites as hero-patriots, who, loving their country, promised to serve Hitler, even as spies behind the Soviet lines, hoping thereby to find a chance of changing sides again and rallying to Soviet defence. (Solzhenitsyn believes every word of camp companions who explain their motives in this way). In the chaotic hours of ghastly enemy pressure, Stalin adopted the policy, terrible in its effect, of looking askance at every returning POW and Solzhenitsyn glimpses and reports a tiny part of the sum of tragic and dreadful injustice that followed as a result. But he can perceive no connection between this double game of the enemy and the poisoning of the atmosphere to which it led.

Blinkers

And the *blinkers!* Here they reach beatitude!

In the world in which the author of *Gulag* lives there is no Indonesia, no South Vietnam, no Chile, no Greece, no Turkey, no South Korea, no South

[20] Defending the engineers accused of sabotage: "Why shouldn't the engineers have considered it more natural for the structure of society to be headed by those who could intelligently direct its activity?" *Gulag*, p. 390.

[21] Col.-Gen. Korovnikov (letter in the *Times* 26.2.74); Len Crome (*Comment*, 20.4.74); etc.

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Africa, Israel or Brazil, no Northern Ireland, to quote, almost at random, only a few areas where parallel arbitrariness, injustice, disregard of legality, corruption or torture has recently been, or is even today, proceeding in relation to prisoners, comparable in detail[22] or even, in some of them, exceeding in scope those that are the subject of *Gulag*.

Let there be no misunderstanding. The purpose of citing such examples is not in any way to belittle the gravity of the events that Solzhenitsyn's account, for all its faults of fact and presentation, has graphically assembled. Nor is it to argue that two wrongs make a right. It is simply to emphasise the superficiality and falsity of a *verdict*, that presents such past injustices, crime and error as an inevitable outcome of the October Revolution and Socialism, and calls for reversion to systems that have so signally failed—and still fail—to prevent similar and worse happenings elsewhere.

Solzhenitsyn says that he deliberately did not concern himself with elsewhere, but only with his own country. That was his right (though he should have done it better). But the moment he stepped into the domain of moral judgment and causal conclusions, he needed the wider view. Without it, they can be nothing but ignorance and spleen, useless to humanity.

Gulag came out at a bad time for himself and the industry. Viewed at a distance, behind a curtain hazily, the author could be attributed all sorts of wisdoms. But suddenly achieving his longed-for full self-exposure, in press conference and proclamation, then finally appearing to the West in person, without a veil, the emerging features turned out somewhat of a disappointment even to his most enthusiastic followers.

Newsweek (18.3.74)[23] reports a cabinet meeting of the then US administration at which Richard Nixon wonderingly exclaimed of the *Letter to Soviet Leaders* that "Solzhenitsyn is to the right of Barry Goldwater". And Henry Kissinger's reply: "No, Mr. President, he is to the right of the czars". The same article reports a professional pundit[24] worrying lest the writer's howlers be seized on to "try to undermine the power of his novels"; and concludes sorrowfully that Solzhenitsyn turns out to be "a non-political holy fool".

Destroyed by "the Industry"

Worse still, not only this but querulous besides, ready to turn on every would-be backer as soon as any fails him by the slightest disagreement. Tvardovsky, his loyal benefactor, in the end he felt too weak. The Swedish Embassy was 'servile' over the Nobel Prize ceremony. Sakharov's criticism is unwarranted. Roy Medvedev's ideas simply "laughable". Even Peterborough in the ever-faithful *Daily Telegraph* (26.6.74) is constrained to a gentle reproach that its hero's "criticisms of the lack of courage and enterprise shown by Western correspondents . . . ring a little oddly, surely, when one reflects that it was only by using them to send abroad his manifestos and declarations about Soviet society that he became universally recognised". Now, Solzhenitsyn has found a home-from-home in a new five-language quarterly providing a forum for dissident exile writers and scholars financed by—Axel Springer!

Whence this decline? G.B.S. always said that many of his friends had been in prison and he knew few who had been the better for it; and many who should know say that no-one could pass through Gulag and not be permanently altered. But there are many mysteries about Solzhenitsyn. Not the least are the four portraits of him published with *Gulag*—one as a boy, one a young officer, one just out of prison, and one as the sage: each shows a face at exactly the same angle and each, save for the fringe beard on the last, is *exactly the same*. The biggest perhaps is how he could pass through the Young Pioneers, the YCL and courses at a Soviet Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature without, as his references to both Marxism and Christianity show, acquiring the slightest real knowledge of either of them. His final responsibility no doubt we can leave to St. Peter to assess when the time comes at the gates of Heaven. What is sure is that the flattery of the industry has destroyed him.

[22] For *peace-time* practice in Western Europe, note the prison scandal of Mannheim, Baden-Württemburg (the third such, says the *Times* 28.8.74, in Federal Germany in recent months) and the filth, violence and police complicity—exactly recalling Solzhenitsyn's description of prison transfers—apparently normal for ordinary journeys of the Paris-Istanbul direct express (Patricia Clough from Rome in the *Times*, 2.4.74). To come nearer home still, detention without bail, indeterminate sentences, police injustice, police fraud and police whitewash are not unknown on our own well-ordered doorstep, and there have been more actions for violations of the European human rights conventions brought against Britain than against any other signatory.

[23] Article by Richard Boeth.

[24] Prof. Thompson Bradley.

Communist Party Pamphlets

MARXISM AND THE FAMILY

(Selected contributions from *Marxism Today* discussion)

25p

CLASS STRUCTURE

(Selected contributions from *Marxism Today* discussion)

25p

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Discussion Contributions on:

TRENDS IN YOUTH CULTURE

Maurice Costin.

While John Boyd's well researched contribution in *Marxism Today* of December 1973 brought to light some extremely useful facts on youth his main conclusion that the youth revolt in reality "has been nothing more than the natural dissatisfaction between age and youth blown up out of all recognition" is seriously in error.

Of course there are tremendous weaknesses in the revolt, but to suggest there have been no important changes because the youth have not done enough on unemployment and other issues would put us in great danger of "throwing the baby out with the bathwater". Similarly to ask in relation to the Beatles and others where are these "pop leaders now?" is not germane to the question of whether or not they were at one time an expression or a part of significant changes in the attitudes of British youth. For example, the value of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* still stands regardless of his latter day deviations.

Whilst capitalism has certainly "moved in, fostered and exploited the so called generational differences" to a greater extent than in past periods it is a sign of its weakening influence among the young people that it is forced to take such a course. The very process of encouraging alienation helps alienate young people from capitalism's values. The very argument that capitalism has staged-managed the "youth revolt" poses the questions why would they want to suggest that all was not well if they could avoid it, and what is it that they are managing?

Youth Discontent

It is certainly true that significant changes in the attitudes and values of youth as a whole could not be conjured up from out of the blue, but must have a material environmental basis. What therefore was the basis for the tremendous changes in fashions, pop music, attitudes to sex, and demonstrations on issues among the young since the end of the 50s? Did the capitalist class wave a wand and deliberately set up all those Easter peace marches? Were they keen on the university sit-ins, the Vietnam marches? For Lennon and McCartney should we read Home and McMillan? Was all that ingenious never-ending change in clothing fashion the brain child of uninhibited upper-class public school lads or were working class youngsters responsible?

To believe that the whole thing was completely engineered is to give far too much credit to the ruling class, and to underrate the intelligence of working class youth. To whatever extent the capitalist class steered the ship of youth discontent there is no doubt that vessel exists, and the important thing is for it to be captained and crewed by the Communist Party and the Left.

What caused the changes?

There is no doubt that significant changes have come about concerning youth particularly since the 50's but why? If we reject the notion that it was because the ruling class desired it then we have got to probe deeper to discover what were the causes, and to what it is that the capitalist class has tried to direct these changed values of young people. To get to the root of the problem we have to recognise that the post-war period carried with it a tremendous qualitative change that no youth had previously had to face i.e. nuclear weapons and fall out from the nuclear tests. Thus the post-war youth have had to live for the first time with the possibility of complete annihilation, and it was impossible for the traumatic shock of this situation to have no effect on the minds of young people.

The effects which the nuclear age had upon the British youth must have caused a great shock to the capitalist class. Tens of thousands took part in CND activities. Previously docile university students, reliable for strike breaking in the General Strike, took on the mantle of red revolutionaries. The "unpatriotic" campaign against conscription succeeded; the almost dead art of satire was resurrected by youth. British folk music was rediscovered, and became a vehicle for protest among the young. If all this and more was not to become the basis of a mass movement among youth for socialism "something had to be done".

Managing the Monster

With their usual flexibility the capitalist class

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applied their well-known motto "if you cannot beat it join it" and attempted to direct it. *That was the Week That Was* exploded on to our TV screens treating us to dollops of the most biting anti-establishment satire. Working class authors' works were published on an unprecendented scale; working class pop artists were given undreamed of opportunities. The period of the Beatles, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Simon Dee, Twiggy, and others was no accident. However if the capitalist mass-media were the directors of this working class youth orchestra of talent it was also its victim.

Why was it switched on in the first place. In a fairly recent Tory political broadcast Edward Heath confirmed the view that TW3 was an essential safety valve. The important point is that you only need a safety valve in situations where otherwise an explosion would be inevitable.

Dracula's Monster

Like Dracula's Monster the showcase of working class ability was only partly controllable, Having set in motion a situation whereby the leaders in the field of popular art were working class the most astute members of the ruling class realised that the whole exercise was fraught with danger. Thus TW3 was sunk without trace and "kitchen sink drama" got the knocking treatment; Simon Dee got the boot; the Beatles situation remains vacant.

What brought this "revolution" if not to an end at least to a very modified "look how democratic we are" situation in which some but far fewer working class youth are promoted in the mass media? The outstanding reason we were "switched off" was because it was becoming increasingly evident that the very means employed to contain the youth protest in the long run could lay the basis for a qualitive change in the attitude of young people.

It was seen more clearly by the ruling class than by the labour movement that the spectre of artists with working class backgrounds having millions of followers was exceedingly dangerous for a number of reasons. Capitalism has within it the seeds of its own destruction. In attempting to control the nuclear era attitudes of British youth by promoting it in a big way capitalism was willy-nilly giving working class youth a new confidence in its abilities.

Successive generations of socialists have recognised that the movement can only grow hand in hand with the confidence of the working class. Why did the youth listen to the Beatles records but drown them in a cacaphony of adoration when confronted with the famous four at live performances. Surely to some extent the noise was too an expression of great pride that they were in the presence of working class lads that had proved that the "we can make it, and when we do we can be bigger than our betters."

The Real Changes

What can be said with certainty is that what was not stage managed in the youth revolt is what cannot be controlled namely the effect of material changes in the real world. It is the changes in human environment which give rise to new thoughts, and in the process change humanity. The involvement of young people in the post-war protest movements is undeniably real and is above all a reflection of the thermonuclear threat. The numbers of young people actually taking part, though limited, does not minimise the extent of the challenging discontent which goes much wider. Evidence that young people are rejecting the old values of capitalism is abundant.

Though the capitalist media have and will attempt to control the youth they cannot do so with the old pop culture. The US "invasion" of the pop scene is certainly not new, and it can be convincingly argued that it has suffered reverses as well as victories in the post-war years. It is not without significance that every dance band and singer in the 30's and 40's had to sound American whereas, at least for a period, the Americans were trying to sound like the Beatles and Tom Jones. What sort of extension of US influence was this? As to dimly-lit discoteques, where noise and Coke shut out thought, surely few youngsters live their whole lives in such surroundings. Youngsters have always gone to dances for the noise and to blow off the inevitable steam, to meet people of the opposite sex. The profound thinking can and does take place elsewhere.

The lessons

If the youth revolt is written off by the Communist Party and the Left it would be guilty of not having as much perception as the ruling class. At the end of the 50's and early 60's the capitalist mass media gave protesting youth a "bum steer" when it needed a lead from the entire labour movement, which is did not get. However all is not lost. The material basis for youth's disenchantment with the established order is not merely still present, but is increasing. It may well be that the form which youth protest took in the cultural and fashion field gave rise to some alienation between the youth and the adult labour movement. This latter problem may have clouded the issue of what was really going on in the minds of young people. If so it must not happen again.

The only reason that it can be argued at all that there has been no significant change for the better in the outlook of young people is because the real changes that I have attempted to show did occur have not been political. The adult movement needs to wake up to the fact that today youth "dissatisfaction" is, more than ever before, a recognition of the shortcomings of the capitalist system.

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However insufficient leadership has been given to the youth by the labour movement and the consequent anarchic trends can lead us into not seizing the opportunities. Once the enormous resources of the movement are put to use to attract the young people the current trends among youth will be channelled into positive areas of action. In regard to the latter point the winning of the trade unions and utilisation of their financial capability is of key importance.

Ivor Mills

Comrades Fauvet and Kettle mistakenly hail Martin Jacques' contribution statement as a first step in a new discussion. In fact, it is the articulation of a relatively old discussion that has raged within the ranks of the YCL since the mid-'60s and, consequently, through the halls of many a YCL Congress.

Let us make no bones about it. This discussion was (and still is) an angry and fierce one owing to the fact that the direction of the work of the YCL depended/depends on its outcome, and because there have been some severe mistakes arising out of some of the earlier decisions: mistakes that Martin Jacques is repeating. Martin Jacques is correct in his underlying theme that capitalist ideology has increasingly lost the adherence of large sections of British youth, but he has patently failed to explain why this has occurred and has failed to show that this has been expressed in progressive forms.

We are informed by Comrade Jacques that the most obvious sign of youth's disenchantment with the present system was the "explicitly progressive stance taken by a very significant minority of youth on such overtly political questions as the role of imperialism in the under-developed world and, above all, Vietnam. . . .". There can be no argument with this, but when we seek explanations we find in several places that this stance occurred "almost spontaneously". Does this, then, mean that there is no significant role for the YCL to play except to wait for youth to almost respond, more or less progressively, to international crises? The point is that Comrade Jacques has completely underrated the role of the Party and the YCL in laying the basis for the movements that were to occur in the 1960s. The hard work expended in many a campaign clearly shows up the falsity of any suggestion of spontaneity. For those comrades involved in the struggles immediately prior to the mid-'60s[1] there can be no agreement with the term "almost spontaneous", and no sympathy with an assessment which implies that, apart from the Aldermaston marches, this period was only significant for its "skiffle phenomenon".

Nor can the view be escaped that despite what Jacques calls the "relatively low level of struggle of the working class" at that time, this area of class activity has been far more crucial in shaping the present struggles than any (mythical) youth culture phenomenon. And that it is this area of struggle that needs our main energies and analysis. Failure to be clear about this point leads to the kind of inexcusable errors whereby an Executive member of the Communist Party (Jacques) can attempt an analysis of youth struggle without dealing "sufficiently with the position of industrial youth". A similar error in the actual work of the YCL led for a time to a serious neglect of the struggle of young workers in favour of an appeal to an unspecific mass of youth. In such a period *Challenge* became a "magazine" with pages filled with reviews on sporting events, films and pop music and a decreasing reflection on the struggles of young workers. This was based on the mistaken assumption that it was all happening in these areas of life and the working class struggle within the industrial sphere was a lifeless event. "If only we could politicise youth through such things as music, etc., then this new-found consciousness could eventually be brought to bear within the industrial struggles!" What was needed instead was to give a very positive lead to young workers as a focus for the discontent of young people.

Lest it is pointed out that the League grew in this period—in fact, to almost 6,000 members—it should be noted that it was already recording a large growth just prior to this[2] and there can be little doubt that membership quickly halved owing to the failure of a clear class strategy to emerge and a large part of the membership insufficiently committed to the concept of class struggle. Fortunately, due to the mistakes of the past and the heightening of class struggle in the industrial sphere, the YCL Congresses

[1] For example, the apprentice struggles; the rent/eviction battles; the campaigns against imperialist aggression—in Korea, Cyprus, Aden, South Africa, Malaya, Vietnam, Egypt, etc.; the unemployment campaigns; the fight for the vote at 18; the anti-racist campaigns; the political struggle to defeat successive Tory governments and to resist the denationalisation of important sectors of the transport industry, etc.

[2] The 1960's began with a YCL of 2,000 members. By 1962 this had doubled, without the help of "Trend".

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of 1971 and 1973 were able to reject calls for (vague) appeals to unspecified youth and for the development of magazine concept of *Challenge*. Instead, *Challenge* was to return as an organising and campaigning paper much needed for our (now) main work among young workers and among school students. The period—known as the "Trend Era"—had (hopefully) passed into the dustbin of history!

Now Comrade Jacques seeks to confront us with "Son of Trend". And there can be no illusions about the importance of his contribution. As an executive member of our Party and a comrade who is playing a key role in relation to YCL education, we must not ignore the intent of the article which seeks to "establish how the Party and the *YCL in particular* should relate and respond"[3] to youth "cultural revolt". The debate is not academic! The new trend must be rejected as surely as the first.

Nature of the "Revolt"

Let us look closer now at the question of the nature of the "revolt" and its forms. Far from dealing with the mythology of a generation-gap, Martin Jacques develops it. In the same way that he implies that the "youth revolt" began to develop around the time of his own involvement, he assumes that there is somehow something peculiarly progressive in the music that he begins to take notice of. For example, I could not fail to be unimpressed by his description of the Beatles and Co., whose music —apart from the lyrics[4]—is apparently "actively involving"; unimpressed, because I could not make a distinction between these groups (and the reactions of youth to them) and earlier groups and singers ranging through Lonnie Donnigan, Johnny Ray and Frank Sinatra. Clearly, the latter—with his earlier reactions against some of the established values and practices of Capitalism (through attitudes of sexual behaviour, dress and opposition to racialism)—ideally fits the bill as being part of Comrade Jacques' progressive cultural phenomenona. After all, in certain homes of the time one could find the complete works of Stalin on the shelves, along with the selected albums of Sinatra. Clearly, this held no indication that "*All or nothing at all*" had any revolutionary implications for the thousands of young people who attended his concerts. Simply, some progressives happened to enjoy romantic music.

Today, we have a situation where increasing numbers of youth are disenchanted with the system of Capitalism, and it *is* a valid point to suggest that attempts have been made, and will be made, to impress this through such things as music—but this is the form of a question rather than an answer. The answer is not that therefore these musical and cultural forms are necessarily progressive and thereby form an important clue to our strategy; rather it is a question of how we can turn this discontent into positive action—class action. The key to our formulation of strategy is to understand what is the *root* of the discontentment rather than look to the *form* of its partial and varied expression. In other words, the key is to seek to involve youth in the main working class struggles: to involve them in such struggles as the "rate at 18", the right to work, the fight to build youth trade union sections, the battle to wrest the movement from the right-wing and win a Labour Government committed to left policies and backed by a left-wing trade union and Labour movement, etc., etc.

Diversionary Forms

One of Comrade Jacques' many errors was to overlay present "youth discontentment" as something clearly progressive, but this need not be—indeed, is not in many cases—true. For example, this can be seen in the case of those who react against the nature of work in Capitalist society by not working, or those who seek anarchistic forms in reply to a repulsion against bourgeois democracy, etc. Yet, clearly, because this occurs, it demands our attention as Marxist-Leninists; not, as Jacques implies, in order to orientate our strategy along the lines of "cultural work", but so as we can understand how whole sections of youth are being (as yet) successfully diverted away from the central struggle.

In making an assessment of the various diversionary forms, we cannot lightly dismiss the idea that there are forces at work deliberately fostering such things. In an attempt to reject a "conspiracy theory", Comrades Kettle and Fauvet rather foolishly sought to substitute an equally naïve view of the workings of Capitalism.[5] As Claude Cockburn puts it[6], the owners of the mass media need not be part of any conspiracy when they can appoint editors whose political views accord with their own. But don't let us forget that such a situation means that the *Morning Star* cannot advertise on television, while the *Sun*, *Express*, *Mail*, etc., get endless time; that the National Front can broadcast while we are prevented, and that Trotskyists from various countries can be given a two-hour television programme (1968) while genuine revolutionaries are lucky to get the odd chance of being interviewed. Not conspiratorial, but deliberate nonetheless. In the same way, various expressions of discontent are

[3] My emphasis.

[4] Denver Walker deals adequately with this aspect—*Marxism Today*, July.

[5] Unfairly, they attribute such a crude approach to Comrade Boyd (*Marxism Today*, December). Even a cursory reading will show that this is not the case.

[6] The Devil's Decade.

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allowed where it is considered that they are no great threat to the power structure (see Denver Walker's pertinent remarks on this—*Marxism Today*, July).

Clearly, we are in a period fraught with possibilities: a period in which the hegemony of Capitalist ideology is beginning to lose its hold on the minds and hearts of great sections of people. In such a period it is crucial that we have a clear strategy and a positive (revolutionary) ideology, seeking to raise the consciousness of young workers in struggle; seeking to involve other young workers in that struggle, and seeking to ally other sections of youth with this struggle.

Running through such a struggle must be commitment to win youth to a genuine internationalist perspective—one that involves support for the socialist countries as well as opposition to imperialism. A view that Comrade Jacques did not feel worthy of comment, his only reference to the role of the socialist countries, in fact, being to claim that, due to events ranging through the 20th Congress, CPSU to the "Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968", the "influence exercised by the socialist countries and particularly the Soviet Union on youth" has been "considerably weakened". If—as a Communist Party and YCL—we are not vigilant enough, such a view can become a self-fulfilling prophecy and that would be a tragic mistake.

That Comrade Jacques—a leading Party member—can weave such a patchwork of ifs-and-buts and vague generalisations is indeed tragic. Regretfully, I must concede with him that it is the "rather hurried" work of "a layman in the field". But a lay Marxist-Leninist (which is surely the implication) is not only inexcusable but is clearly not possible.

A Marxist view of Literature

John Griffiths

[*The author is a former radio producer and well-known author of plays and children's books in Welsh. This article was first published in* Cyffro (*Change*), *a quarterly Marxist journal for Wales edited by Alistair Wilson* (*Vol. 2, No. 2*)].

Introduction

Marxist criticism has tended in the past to concentrate on the social and ideological content of works of art, and in that direction it has been stimulating and fruitful. Yet nagging problems remain. One is the attitude of Soviet authorities to their dissident writers. Another is of providing standards of criticism. It is not enough, for instance, for a piece of writing to be ideologically sound; it needs to be of high, artistic quality. How, then, do we go about facing up to these problems? Not by ignoring Marxism, but by taking an objective look at literature and seeing if Marxism could not, in fact, be applied to its problems.

To understand the "process" of literature one needs to differentiate between man's two faculties, imagination and reason. These terms may be old-fashioned, but to a considerable extent they are terms which writers themselves have used. Thus, Coleridge has a theory of the "primary" and the "secondary" imaginations—ably expounded in the 'thirties of this century by D. G. James in his book, "Scepticism and Poetry". Coleridge admittedly was an idealist philosopher for whom the primary imagination was the faculty which made "wholes", gave relationships to discrete sense-data. But his views on the secondary imagination, the poetic faculty and the way it operates, are the views of a theorist who is also a poet. In any case, there is a Marxist, a materialist case for looking upon the imagination as primary in man's development, which I shall attempt to summarise.

Imagination and Experience

It would seem that imagination was primary in man's development, since it grew out of his capacity to mirror experience, to envision it one might say, to digest the images of it deep down in his subconscious and finally to find expression for this "digested" experience of his. Such expression is concrete, vivid, personal. It can be speech—poetry particularly—song, art (cave walls), dance, and from it comes magic, ritual, religion and ultimately literature as we know it.

Meantime, as man's experience and his capacity to operate from it on his outside world, and as he struggles to provide expression for that experience, he finds that he needs to go beyond the imaginative concept, he needs the *abstract* concept: he needs to *generalise*. A brief illustration: the development of mathematics from the holding-up of fingers (and, perhaps, toes as well!) until we now have the most abstract of all forms of thinking. (Could one possibly visualise mathematical concepts? Hardly.)

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I must stress here that, although, for the purpose of my argument, it is essential to differentiate between these two faculties, these two ways of thinking, it must be emphasised that they can and do interpenetrate and that for the highest forms of thinking this interpenetration is essential. Either may soar, but the other then should be used to check upon the flight. In the complexities of life today, of course, the capacity to think in abstractions, to be able to generalise, to discover the laws that link phenomena, is of major importance. Yet even in the process of discovering scientific laws the initial process is akin to the process from which poems spring—the operation of the secondary imagination. . . . Something which we call inspiration, a flash of intuition, a kind of superimposition of images, takes place. To paraphrase Wordsworth, at these times we get "thoughts that do fly too quickly for words".

Then comes the long process of formulating that intuition, of working it out as a "law", of devising apparatus to check that law, etc. At least, this is how the author of the "Double Helix" seems to describe the way he and his partner made their break-through in genetics.

Setting Our Imagination Alight

But to revert to the poet. He in particular lives from one inspiration to the next and the trough in between them may well be for him an unbearable experience—as it was in the case of Dylan Thomas. And who better than D.T. to illustrate the operation of the imagination? He is concerned with expressing experience, personal experience, and he could only do that in his own personal way, from his imagination and through words and images that evoke something similar in the imagination of his reader.

One can think also of Tolstoy, probably the most-read creative writer in the Soviet Union—not because of his ideology which was vaguely religious and populist, but because of his tremendous power of absorbing wide human experience, of digesting it into artistic form and so presenting it that his words set our imagination alight.

The world of his books has a validity of its own, not dependent on the ideology which he superimposed upon the truth of his imagination.

I think of the other genius to whom we apply the word "universal"—Shakespeare. His world appears infinite and our lives are enriched as we submit ourselves to it. But we do not go to him for scientific theory, in so far as he reflects the popular scientific views of his day, and one is tempted to sum up his political ideology thus: that kings should be good, but that when they are bad they come to a bad end and one can then expect better from their successors.

No, the primary function of literature (and by that I mean creative literature and not party literature, which has a different though none the less important function) is to convey personal experience. And why? Because there is a paradox; man is not only a social, he is also an isolated animal. The poet Donne may have written that "no man is an island", but it is people such as Donne himself who do so much to prevent his being so. Our experiences are unique and at the same time similar. For practical purposes we need generalisations, theories, exhortations, but for therapeutic purposes we need the arts. They communicate feelings and inner visions. But not easily. Their practitioners need to be highly gifted as well as skilled in their craft.

Once theories have been developed, it is relatively easy for whoever studies them to find words to convey or apply them. But each work of creative literature requires a unique effort. Which is why poets and writers, for instance, seem to be so unusually concerned with matters of form, with words even.

Form and Content

And here is where Marxism can be particularly illuminating, for the ever-recurring struggle between form and content. I see it as a dialectic process. But the problem is one which is constantly bothering both artists and critics. First of all, one must recognise that there *is* a struggle. Something is trying to emerge from the subconscious. It may find immediate expression. In such a case one might argue that form and content were identical. But I cannot see the process as being quite as simple as that. There must at least have been a struggle in the subconscious. There must have been a process which culminated in their fusion. In some cases, it does not even end when words have been committed to paper. W. B. Yeats, for instance, wrote and re-wrote, and one can see from the drafts of some of his poems how, in the course of the struggle, the poem developed—the form and the content interacting upon one another and developing thereby. Another point worth making about Yeats is that of his ideology—or, rather, the irrelevance of it.

Conor Cruise O'Brian has established that Yeats certainly flirted with the Irish Fascism of the 'thirties, and there are other ideas in his poems which may not seem to us to have much relevance, yet the poems themselves, being the basic distillation of experience clothed in words that evoke an imaginative response in the reader, have a validity of their own. They are judged as having succeeded through the quality of their form. It is the texture of the work of art, that quality of human, personal experience indissolubly interlinked with words, which is the final test.

"Of the Making of Books—There is no End"

Writers are often criticised for not giving a "true picture" of society or of distorting their

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picture of that society, so let us consider for a moment this word "true". It would help if we were to remind ourselves of the totality of experience. Not even Marxism expresses this to the full. As ever with philosophy, it *abstracts* from experience. It takes from phenomena those elements which link into a decisive pattern. It generalises from them and it formulates principles which can be read back into the pattern to see if they fit, to see if they *work*. This testing by experience, which in Marxism is continuous, and has made more sense than any other body of principles, justifies such statements as that Marxism corresponds to objective reality, that it gives us active truth. However, its main preoccupation has been with how society operates, how society needs to be changed and how society can be changed. In its analysis it shows how class forces operate and here we should remind ourselves of Marx's famous analogy of the parallelogram of forces. The forces in the parallelogram are made up of individuals, myriads of them, but it is with these individuals that the artist is concerned. And once we consider the individual we realise that he is a kind of infinite world in himself; certainly, it would be an infinite task to give full expression to his actions, his thoughts, his relationships, his feelings, his images, his colour. Thus, all writing may be considered to be fragmentary and there is no finality. "Of the making of books there is no end".

The Problems of Criticism

One may concede the wider vision to such writers as Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Goethe, etc., but there is nothing absolute even in the achievement of such giants as these. We still need the works of other writers, including those who are content with the lesser—at least, the more obviously fragmentary forms such as the short story or the lyric poem.

But if we cannot expect a kind of "complete" truth from a writer, ought we not to expect from him that he should not give us a distortion of the truth? That is something for his readers and critics to ponder over and argue about, always bearing in mind that what they see in front of them may well convey the truth as the artist has experienced it. It may be, for instance, that his experience has been so disturbing that he can only find relief by giving its expression a kind of distorting emphasis. How else could a satirist operate? And should we condemn Solzhenitsyn if we find that his own bitter experience has forced him into bitter, even one-sided expression? It is the thwarting of his role of being a creature allowed to communicate with his people which has set him off in a direction where he is quite at sea, so that when he writes his letter to the Soviet Government his propositions are arrant rubbish.

This is not a plea for elevating the writer/artist above criticism. It is an argument for basing that criticism on knowing how the creative artist's mind works and for the need to be aware that basically his approach to experience is through the imagination. Nor would we deny that this approach has its weaknesses. Thus, to use an old but still serviceable figure of speech, he may be able to depict with remarkable insight the tree in the wood and yet be quite wrong when he attempts to picture the general shape and nature of the wood, since that might call for abstract theory.

On the other hand, it is possible for his insight to leap to the wider conclusion with remarkable penetration. Thus the poet Shelley, in an age when the stratification of society in a kind of descending order of merit was accepted generally with ideological justification, nevertheless saw clearly and proclaimed with passion that all men were essentially equal. However, such recurring insights do not dispose of the dangers of relying on the imagination alone to provide a perspective on society. Ours is a world in which interested parties see to it that false ideas are spread and a writer may justly be criticised if he allows his imaginative insight to betray him into uncritical acceptance of the ideas propagated by the capitalist mass media. He needs Marxism if he is to take in the wider horizons and, indeed, if he is fully to understand his characters and their relationship with one another.

The Hard Task of the Marxist Writer

At the opposite pole we have the writer who is equipped with a proper understanding of Marxism, whose ideology is impeccable, but who fails to convey imaginative truth. This has been the case with not a few of the writers of the Stalinist era. It is not enough to be sound ideologically; there is always the problem of achieving successful form for the insights of the imagination.

It is possible to argue that in the matter of form the Marxist writer faces a harder task than the writer who is content to accept the ideas which prevail in capitalist society. A Christian poet, for instance, has gorgeous words and imagery to hand, whereas the Marxist poet is in a process of struggle to find the new and appropriate words and images which are to give form and life to the experience he wants to express. This is where the achievement of the poet/playwright Bertolt Brecht has been so noteworthy and particularly remarkable has been his success in conveying abstract ideas through imaginative, concrete form. A superb example is his play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, in which an abstract principle, the nature of justice, is presented in a world of character and incident that is an organic creation in itself. But maybe one should not praise Brecht's achievement too highly lest some official theorist should declare him the model for all Marxist

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writers, the Maxim Gorki of the present day. A writer may draw tremendous inspiration from such giants as these, but if he is to attain maturity he must become true to himself, to the insights which his own imagination and talent give him.

So far, I have concerned myself basically with the writer as individual and with the creative process itself—to achieve which the writer must, for a period at least, withdraw himself from his society. But this is not to argue that he need not be aware of his society and of his responsibilities to it. Indeed, in times of crisis, poets, for example, have been amongst the first to rush to its defence. Thus, to offer but one example, the Hungarian poet hero, Petofi, sacrificed his life in the national and revolutionary uprising of 1848. Nowadays, although there are still too many poets who lose their lives in wars, governments have become more discriminating and tend to use them as propagandists. And to this, too, when convinced of the rightness of their cause, poets have been ready to dedicate their talents. Nevertheless, I would assert that, for the good of society itself, its creative artists should be demobilised as soon as the worst of the danger is over. Implicit in my argument is the thought that where writers, for instance, are allowed their full freedom to function, there will be so much diversity in the works they produce that in the outcome these works will be found to be self-correcting.

The True Function of the Creative Writer

By now we are in a position to sum up what the true function of the creative writer is. In the first place, it is to make us aware of ourselves, to express for us what we find almost inexpressible, to make us more conscious of the world around us—Teilhard de Chardin has said that "it is the artist whose function it is to open our eyes"—and to bring us out of our inner emotional isolation. By confronting us with our own emotions and "distancing" them for us, his work is therapeutic.

However, his work is not only therapeutic for the individual. It is so also for society as a whole. It has already been stressed that there is a wide range to the truth which writers express. Some who write may be forward-looking, pointing in the direction of what society can and should become. There are others who can express only the immediate, the close-at-hand truth as they perceive it, and this can be awkward for those whose efforts are directed towards building up and improving that society. But if there is a kind of dæmon in the artist which can make him troublesome, the fact that he projects awkward truths or awkward views of the truth also operates as a corrective. It is concrete, actual experience that he perceives, and if his vision does not conform with the generalisations or the directives, however well-intentioned, of society's rulers—then it can only be to the advantage of society to have that non-correspondence, those anomalies, exposed.

Thus the arts, if allowed to function in freedom, can operate as a corrective to politics, and this is particularly important in a one-party State. Indeed, one is tempted to speculate—what if, by some fantastic chance, the arts had been really free in Stalin's day? But the argument goes further. Societies undergo traumatic shocks—wars, revolutions, purges. However adequately (or inadequately as in the phrase "the cult of personality") such experiences are explained afterwards, there is a need in a society which has undergone such an experience to "work it out of its system" and this cannot be achieved on the purely philosophical or political level. It can be argued that the sooner an appalling experience can be forgotten the better for all concerned. But such forgetting may be the equivalent of brushing under the carpet. What is needed is for society to face up fully to what has happened and that can only be brought about by allowing the fullest scope for writing of all kinds. The difficulty has been that Marxists, realising that the attainment of Communism needs not only the overthrow of the old order of society, but also a making over of the old ways of thought, have been tempted into short cuts in their desire to achieve the new man with his new and socialist way of thinking.

We know now that there are no short cuts. What we need also to know is that the creative arts have their own way of looking at social phenomena, but that if they are allowed to function freely they, too, in the long run, play their part in the making of the new man.

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